United Nations A/58/350

General Assembly

Distr.: General
5 September 2003

Original: English

Fifty-eighth session
Item 119 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Human rights questions: implementation of human rights instruments

Effective implementation of international instruments on human rights, including reporting obligations under international instruments on human rights

Note by the Secretariat

Attached herewith is the report of the chairpersons of the human rights treaty bodies on their fifteenth meeting, held at Geneva from 23 to 27 June 2003. At the request of the chairpersons, the report of the second inter-committee meeting of human rights treaty bodies is annexed to that report.

* A/58/150.

03-49627 (E) 271003

Report of the Chairpersons of the human rights treaty bodies on their fifteenth meeting

Summary

The fifteenth meeting of chairpersons of human rights treaty bodies was convened in Geneva from 23 to 27 June 2003, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 49/178 of 23 December 1994. The chairpersons considered follow-up to the recommendations of the fourteenth meeting and reviewed recent developments relating to the work of the treaty bodies. They were given an update on the status of the Annual Appeal of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and on the programme to strengthen support to and enhance the effectiveness of the treaty bodies. The chairpersons met with representatives of non-governmental organizations, the specialized agencies and United Nations departments, funds and programmes, with representatives of States parties and with members of the Bureau, including the Chairperson, of the Commission on Human Rights. The fifth joint meeting was held with the participants of the tenth meeting of special rapporteurs/representatives, independent experts and chairpersons of working groups of the special procedures of the Commission on Human Rights and of the advisory services programme. The chairpersons adopted recommendations, which are contained in section X of the present report. The report of the second inter-committee meeting of human rights treaty bodies (Geneva, 18-20 June 2003), which was considered by the chairpersons, appears in annex I to the present report.

In paragraph 8 of its resolution 57/300 of 20 December 2002, the General Assembly encouraged States parties to the human rights treaties and the respective treaty bodies to review the reporting procedures with a view to developing a more coordinated approach and to streamlining the reporting requirements under the treaties and requested the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to support that exercise, including through the submission of recommendations as appropriate.

The present report of the chairpersons of human rights treaty bodies on their fifteenth meeting contains information relevant to the implementation of resolution 57/300.

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I. Introduction

1. The fifteenth meeting of chairpersons of the human rights treaty bodies, convened pursuant to General Assembly resolution 49/178 of 23 December 1994, was held at the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Geneva from 23 to 27 June 2003. The meeting was preceded by the second inter-committee meeting, held from 18 to 20 June 2003 (for the report of that meeting, see annex I). In addition to considering the implementation of the recommendations of the fourteenth meeting, the chairpersons were invited to discuss the ideas contained in the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change" (A/57/387) and the report of a brainstorming meeting on reform of the human rights treaty body system held in Malbun, Liechtenstein, from 4 to 7 May 2003 (HRI/ICM/2003/4-HRI/MC/2003/4).

2. The following chairpersons of human rights treaty bodies attended the meeting: Feride Acar, Chairperson of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women; Abdelfattah Amor, Chairperson of the Human Rights Committee; Virginia Bonoan-Dandan, Chairperson of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; Peter Burns, Chairperson of the Committee against Torture; Jakob E. Doek, Chairperson of the Committee on the Rights of the Child; and Ion Diaconu, Chairperson of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

3. The meeting was opened by the Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, Bertrand Ramcharan, on 23 June 2003.

4. Mr. Doek was elected Chairperson-Rapporteur of the meeting and Mr. Burns was elected Vice-Chairperson. At the opening meeting, the chairpersons adopted the agenda (HRI/MC/2003/1) and the proposed programme of work.

II. Address by the Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights

5. In his opening statement, the Deputy High Commissioner thanked the chairpersons for their service, commitment and devotion to the promotion and protection of human rights. He welcomed the adoption by the General Assembly in December 2002 of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. He pointed out that the work of the treaty bodies was attracting greater recognition in regional and national courts and tribunals, and noted that several committees had introduced mechanisms to follow up their concluding observations.

6. The Deputy High Commissioner drew attention to several OHCHR initiatives aimed at supporting States in meeting their reporting obligations and implementing the recommendations of the treaty bodies. These included a pilot workshop, held in Quito in August 2002, to follow up on the recommendations of the Human Rights Committee, a regional training course on the preparation and presentation of reports to treaty bodies held in Tegucigalpa in May 2003, and the reassignment of a staff member of the Support Services Branch to the Office of the Regional Adviser to the High Commissioner in Santiago de Chile. He emphasized the efforts of the Office to secure sufficient resources to support the work of the treaty bodies and strengthen

the Petitions Unit. Some changes had been made to the structure of the Office since the previous meeting, including the creation of an External Relations Branch and a Special Procedures Branch.

7. Turning to the ideas on strengthening human rights put forward by the Secretary-General in his report, the Deputy High Commissioner indicated that their objective was to reinforce human rights at the country level, maximize the potential of the human rights treaty system, enhance the work of the special procedures and streamline the management of the Office. With regard to the second objective, the Deputy High Commissioner described the efforts of the Office to ensure broad and inclusive consultations with treaty bodies, States parties, non-governmental organizations and United Nations bodies, including the brainstorming meeting held in Liechtenstein. He thanked the chairpersons for providing the written views of their committees on the Secretary-General's ideas to the High Commissioner and welcomed the points of agreement of the second inter-committee (see annex I), which he viewed as a constructive input into the ongoing consultations. The recommendations on cross-referencing of concluding observations/comments, collaboration on general comments/recommendations, the role of national human rights institutions, capacity-building, follow-up to concluding observations and the encouragement of timely reporting were particularly important. He also noted that the inter-committee meeting shared the concerns and objectives enunciated by the Secretary-General in his report on organizational reform, but agreed that they could be more appropriately met by an expanded core document and by targeted, treaty-specific reports.

III. Follow-up to previous recommendations and review of recent developments relating to the work of treaty bodies

8. Noting that information on developments with respect to his committee were contained in the report of the second inter-committee meeting and the background document prepared by the secretariat (HRI/MC/2003/2), the Chairperson of the Human Rights Committee underlined the importance and usefulness of the meeting of human rights chairpersons as a forum for the discussion of common concerns.

9. The Chairperson of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights reported on the adoption of a statement on the Millennium Development Goals and economic and social rights with the special rapporteurs on economic, social and cultural rights of the Commission on Human Rights. The Committee had also adopted General Comment No. 15 on the right to water, and convened a general discussion on the right to food. The Committee was currently working on a general comment on gender equality and on the right to work and a statement on cultural rights. In May 2003, the Joint Expert Group on the monitoring of the right to education, comprising members of the Committee on Conventions and Recommendations of the Executive Board of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, had met in Paris. A follow-up meeting would be held in November 2003. An informal meeting with States parties was also scheduled for November. The Committee favoured closer cooperation with other treaty bodies and was soliciting comments on its general comment on article 3 from the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

10. The Chairperson of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination reported that a thematic debate on discrimination based on descent, resulting in a general recommendation, had been held with NGOs, States parties and members of the Subcommission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights. A statement on the impact of armed conflict on human rights had also been adopted. The Committee had actively collaborated with other bodies, including the International Law Commission. An informal meeting with States parties would be convened at its session in August 2003. As it had been unable to convene a pre-sessional working group, the Committee had not drawn up lists of issues and questions to transmit to States parties in advance of the consideration of their reports. The Committee was open to receiving information from national human rights institutions and NGOs.

11. The Chairperson of the Committee against Torture reported that one article 20 inquiry had been completed in 2002 and another was scheduled for 2004. As inquiries required significant financial resources, only a limited number could be conducted. The Committee had also concluded a statement on human rights obligations in the face of terrorist threats, which had been sent to States parties. The Committee had established a working group on non-reporting and, as a result, one non-reporting State had submitted a report. In November, the pre-sessional working group would begin to prepare a list of issues and questions to be transmitted to States parties prior to the consideration of their reports. As in the past, the Committee against Torture, the Special Rapporteur on torture, the Chairperson of the Board of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture and the High Commissioner would issue a joint statement on 26 June 2003, the International Day of Support for the Victims of Torture.

12. The Chairperson of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women indicated that at its twenty-ninth session the Committee would convene a meeting with States parties whose reports were more than five years overdue to discuss measures to encourage reporting. In preparation, a profile of non-reporting States parties had been prepared by the Division for the Advancement of Women. As an exceptional and temporary measure, the Committee encouraged States parties with overdue reports to combine reporting obligations in a single document; furthermore, an exceptional session of the Committee had been held during 2002 to review the reports of 11 States parties. The Committee was currently preparing a general recommendation on temporary special measures (article 4.1), and experts were preparing background papers for general comments on other issues. The Committee had also established a standing working group on its Optional Protocol. In conclusion, the Chairperson noted that enhanced collaboration with the Division and with OHCHR had resulted in a higher quality of support for the Committee.

13. The Chairperson of the Committee on the Rights of the Child stated that there were a significant number of reports awaiting review by the Committee, which was a cause of concern. The submission of a significant number of overdue reports would exacerbate this backlog, as would the submission of reports under the two Optional Protocols to the Convention. The membership of the Committee had recently expanded from 10 to 18 and discussions had been initiated on the possibility of establishing parallel chambers/task forces/subgroups to review a greater number of reports. Regarding the Secretary-General's proposals, the Committee considered that the emphasis should be on strengthening existing

mechanisms, such as the core document, rather than on fundamental changes, such as allowing for a single report.

IV. Update on the status of the Annual Appeal 2003 and the 2002-2004 Programme to Support Human Rights Organs and Treaty Bodies

14. The secretariat outlined efforts to implement the activities for which extrabudgetary funds had been raised in 2002 and the emphases of the 2003 Annual Appeal. Extrabudgetary funds received in 2002 had been used to provide additional human resources for the servicing of treaty bodies. This had resulted in a reduction of the delay between the submission and the examination of States parties' reports and in the processing of communications. Financial support had also been provided for informal meetings between treaty bodies and States parties, the first inter-committee meeting and the Committee on the Rights of the Child discussion day in September 2002.

15. During 2003, priorities included support to the Documents Processing Unit, the Treaty Body Recommendations Unit, the Malbun brainstorming meeting, the second inter-committee meeting, the Secretary-General's study on violence against children, and strengthening activities in connection with the follow-up to treaty body recommendations. Funds should be available to support the participation of chairpersons in the sixtieth session of the Commission on Human Rights.

V. Cooperation between treaty bodies and non-governmental organizations

16. The chairpersons convened a meeting with NGOs on 24 June 2003.

17. Discussion between the chairpersons and NGOs focused on measures to address non-reporting and late reporting, the use of treaty body recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of technical cooperation, and greater coordination between international and national NGOs with regard to the reporting process. There was general agreement that enhanced capacity at the national level, within both government and civil society, was crucial to implementing human rights treaty obligations, including the obligation to report.

18. Several speakers addressed the issue of strengthening the treaty body system and spoke positively of the report of the second inter-committee meeting. Questions were raised regarding the periodicity for updating an expanded core document, why NGO information could not be included in all country summaries/analyses prepared by the secretariat for treaty bodies, and how committees would determine whether a report was "substantially" overdue to initiate procedures for non-reporting. NGOs were also concerned that discussions on treaty body reform had focused too narrowly on the issue of reporting, and they encouraged the chairpersons to broaden the debate to encompass strengthening of the human rights treaty body system as a whole and, more specifically, enhancing the implementation of human rights treaties at the national level.

VI. Cooperation between treaty bodies and the specialized agencies and United Nations departments, funds and programmes

19. On 25 June 2003, the chairpersons met with representatives of the specialized agencies and United Nations departments, funds and programmes.

20. The representative of the Department of Public Information addressed the concerns raised by some treaty bodies and Governments regarding press releases on treaty body sessions. She suggested that means should be developed for the treaty bodies or their secretariats to check press releases for accuracy prior to dissemination, since staff levels of the Department were not going to expand.

21. The representative of the International Labour Office welcomed the introduction by OHCHR of an electronic listserve for timely transmission of concluding observations/comments, which could be sent on readily to field offices. The Office was increasing its training, especially of judges, and drew attention to an activity that would take place in Manila in September 2003. He called upon all actors of the United Nations system to work together to reinforce the idea of a unified system of human rights. He urged treaty bodies to provide feedback on the usefulness of the information provided by the Office. The appointment of designated liaison persons by some treaty bodies was welcomed. With regard to reporting, the representative suggested that reports to the Office could be used as part of reports to the treaty bodies.

22. The representative of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) highlighted efforts to adopt a rights-based approach to programming. UNICEF had recently undertaken an evaluation of its work with the Committee on the Rights of the Child, which revealed that this collaboration had enhanced the work of its country programmes. She drew attention to the importance of effective follow-up, for which concrete and realistic recommendations were critical. Recommendations from the Committee provided a framework for practical action, including the development of new country programmes. She also noted that the reporting system allowed for dialogue on sensitive human rights issues. UNICEF was not in favour of allowing States to submit a single report.

23. The representative of the World Health Organization (WHO) described efforts to integrate a human rights perspective into its work, in order to support Governments in taking a human rights-based approach to health development and to advance the right to health. WHO played a role at all stages of the reporting and monitoring process, including assisting in the preparation of reports and the implementation of concluding observations. It had collaborated with certain treaty bodies, in particular in conjunction with United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), in the area of reproductive and sexual health. WHO encouraged consistent follow-up, standardized formats for general comments/recommendations and harmonization of reporting guidelines and procedures. Closer linkage between observations and recommendations of treaty bodies and Charter-based mechanisms could also be encouraged.

24. The representative of UNFPA indicated that background reports had been prepared for the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Human Rights Committee, and UNFPA would welcome feedback on them. General

comments/recommendations, accompanied by explanatory notes on how they could be included in country programmes, had been transmitted to UNFPA field offices. UNFPA was also engaged in developing a rights-based approach to its programming and was conducting a review of the extent to which rights could be further integrated into its work. It now intended to focus on capacity-building with respect to the rights-based approach.

25. The representative of UNESCO indicated that its new draft strategy on human rights would be considered at the General Conference in October. It was seeking to increase its contribution to all human rights through education and research and in its areas of competence. Accordingly, with regard to human rights education, its draft strategy focused on monitoring and standard-setting and strengthening partnerships. Increased cooperation, in particular with treaty bodies, was regarded as a priority.

26. The representative of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) also underlined the importance of cooperation and the complementary nature of human rights and refugee law. He noted that human rights treaties provided basic protection for displaced persons in States that were not party to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. He invited all treaty bodies to give full and proper attention to the problems of refugees, internally displaced persons and other displaced persons. UNHCR was conducting a survey of the concluding comments/recommendations of the committees in order to improve and focus its input. Practical and concrete concluding observations/recommendations of treaty bodies also assisted UNHCR. Consistency and a balanced approach by the treaty bodies was encouraged. UNHCR offered its full support to the human rights treaty bodies and its assistance in the drafting of general comments/recommendations.

27. The representative of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) indicated that UNAIDS considered HIV/AIDS and the lack of protection of human rights to be inextricably linked. There was a broad commitment to dealing with HIV/AIDS and the issue was now being placed in a human rights framework. She indicated, however, that that approach had not been widely reflected in the concluding observations/comments of treaty bodies, although some of the concluding observations/comments of the Committee on the Rights of the Child had been used by some countries to guide the development of programmes and legislation. She welcomed the Committee's General Comment No. 3 on HIV/AIDS and the rights of the child and pledged the support of UNAIDS to the work of human rights treaty bodies.

VII. Cooperation with the Commission on Human Rights and the Subcommission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights

28. On 25 June 2003, the chairpersons met with the Expanded Bureau of the Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-ninth session and with the Chairperson of the Subcommission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights at its fifty-fourth session, Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro. Ambassador Najat Al-Hajjaji, Chairperson of the Commission at its fifty-ninth session, introduced the members of the Expanded Bureau attending the meeting, as well as the coordinators of the regional groups for

Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Western European and other States (the representative of the African Group sent his apologies).

29. The Chairperson highlighted some aspects of the fifty-ninth session and noted the success of strategies to maximize the time available for discussion and the practice of electing the Bureau of the Commission in January. She outlined reforms of the Commission's working methods, such as the introduction of the high-level segment for dignitaries and an interactive dialogue between the special procedures mandate-holders and members of the Commission. She also noted that a number of mandates had been renewed, and that consideration of a number of country situations had moved from item 9 (violations) to item 19 (technical assistance). As a working group on an optional protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights would be convened in 2003, the mandate of the independent expert on that issue had not been renewed.

30. The Chairperson was particularly pleased that the chairpersons of four of the committees (Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Committee on the Rights of the Child, Human Rights Committee) had been able to accept the invitation of the Expanded Bureau to address the session, as recommended by the chairpersons at their meeting in 2002. The Commission considered the effective functioning of the treaty bodies at each of its sessions under a specific agenda item, thereby affording States and NGOs an opportunity to comment on the work of the committees. The Commission had also adopted a number of resolutions calling for a direct or indirect role for the treaty bodies in their implementation.

31. The Chairperson underscored the common aims of the Commission and the treaty bodies in promoting and protecting human rights. Although the Commission was a political body and the treaty bodies were expert bodies, there was considerable scope for cooperation and dialogue, as had been established in recent years.

32. Two of the vice-chairpersons of the Commission also expressed the view that close relations between the Commission and the treaty bodies were essential for ensuring consistency in their work. They both indicated that the recommendations of treaty bodies carried great weight with States parties and encouraged constructive criticism.

33. The Chairperson of the Subcommission described the work of that body, providing details of the many documents and statements, including from NGOs, that the Subcommission had attracted. The Subcommission's working paper on reservations to human rights treaties would be of particular interest to the treaty bodies. It was important to find a way of enhancing interaction between the various bodies and of transmitting studies to the treaty bodies. The Chairperson also underlined the need for a permanent dialogue with Member States as a way of exchanging ideas.

VIII. Fifth joint meeting of chairpersons of human rights treaty bodies and special procedures

34. The joint meeting was co-chaired by Hina Jilani, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on human rights defenders, and Mr. Doek, Chairperson of the

Committee on the Rights of the Child. Discussion began with a presentation by Mr. Pinheiro, who had been appointed by the Secretary-General as the independent expert to lead the study on violence against children. Mr. Pinheiro described the consultative process he was undertaking in the preparation of the study and the major themes it would address. Experts and chairpersons highlighted the importance of addressing violence against children in the context of economic, social and cultural rights, the link between environmental problems such as trade in toxic wastes and violence against children, and the effect of globalization on violence against children. One expert also suggested that Mr. Pinheiro should take account of the international expert consultation on violence prevention and human rights that the Commission, in its resolution 2003/28 of 22 April 2003, had invited OHCHR, WHO and other relevant United Nations entities to convene, while another expert encouraged Mr. Pinheiro to submit a report that was practical rather than academic.

35. The meeting then considered the question of globalization. The secretariat presented a background paper on the question of globalization and human rights that outlined some of the processes of globalization and identified some of the human rights entry points with a view to making globalization work for all. Many experts then took the floor. Several experts highlighted the need to emphasize the effects of globalization on the enjoyment of cultural rights, noting that globalization could threaten cultural diversity. Similarly, globalization had negative effects on political rights, with democracy diminishing as decision-making occurred at the global, rather than the domestic level. Other experts stressed that the events of 11 September 2001 had altered the course of globalization and that at the current stage a discussion on globalization had to be broadened to include issues of counter-terrorism and threats to multilateralism in decision-making. Some experts indicated the need for the various processes of globalization such as trade and investment liberalization to explicitly acknowledge and respect human rights norms and standards, while others noted that transnational corporations should recognize their responsibilities towards the promotion and protection of human rights. One expert warned against defining globalization too broadly, as that could reduce the relevance of the debate.

36. Several experts considered the need for action in response to globalization. Some indicated a need to develop modalities for human rights impact assessments that could be used by special rapporteurs, independent experts and treaty bodies. Several experts suggested the possibility of developing a code of conduct on human rights in the context of globalization. The Chairperson of the joint meeting summarized the discussion and opened the floor for suggestions on themes for the coming year's joint meeting. Experts suggested counter-terrorism measures and their impact on human rights and the rule of law.[1]

IX. Informal consultations with States parties

37. The fifteenth meeting of chairpersons held informal consultations with States parties on 26 June 2003.

38. States parties welcomed the efforts of treaty bodies to increase their level of consultation with States parties and engage proactively in the current process of strengthening the human rights treaty system initiated by the Secretary-General's report. There was agreement that while non-reporting was a serious concern, efforts

at reform should aim at enhancing the effectiveness of the entire system and strengthening national implementation of treaty obligations, including the obligation to report regularly to treaty bodies. Most States parties endorsed the position of the second inter-committee meeting that a single report was not the most effective means of addressing the challenges facing the treaty bodies system, although the point was made that the single report might remain an option for small States. It was also pointed out that while a single, summary report was not acceptable, the submission of a single report complying with all the reporting guidelines of all the treaty bodies might be an approach which could be taken in the long term. In that context, one State party described its efforts to create an easily updatable electronic database that would form the basis for its reporting.

39. Strong support was expressed for the idea of an expanded core document and targeted or focused periodic reports as well as for the harmonization of reporting guidelines. In addition to the information currently contained in the core document, the document could also include information on basic measures of implementation of the treaties and substantive human rights issues common to all treaties. States parties were in favour of having targeted periodic reports that would focus on the implementation of past concluding observations/comments, new developments and priority issues of concern identified by the treaty body in its list of issues. They were also of the opinion that harmonized reporting guidelines which established common rules for the preparation of reports, and their format and length, would facilitate the reporting process.

40. Targeted technical assistance was regarded as crucial in addressing the problem of non-reporting while at the same time contributing to improved implementation of the human rights treaties at the national level. Suggestions were made that OHCHR should play a coordinating role in that regard.

41. Several States parties voiced support for the inter-committee meeting as a forum which allowed a greater number of treaty body experts to participate in discussions on strengthening the effectiveness of the treaty body system. It was felt that broader discussions between treaty bodies were a prerequisite for greater coordination and consistency in their methods of work and the development of a "best practice" approach among treaty bodies. Suggestions were made that the inter-committee meeting should hold informal consultations with States parties.

42. Many States parties were of the opinion that the human rights treaty body system should receive a greater proportion of the United Nations regular budget and that the measures proposed to strengthen the effectiveness of the human rights reporting system would require additional financial resources. Some called for this issue to be raised at the General Assembly. Some support was expressed for the introduction of appropriate honorariums for all treaty body experts.

43. A few States parties stressed the primacy of the State party report as the basis of constructive dialogue between treaty bodies and States parties, and called for clarification on how NGO information was used by treaty bodies. Several suggested that in the interests of transparency and objectivity, all NGO information provided to treaty bodies by NGOs should be transmitted to the relevant State party. A number of States parties expressed concern that press releases regarding the examination of States parties' reports were sometimes inaccurate or sensationalist, and suggested that treaty bodies should develop ways and means of ensuring the accuracy of that output.

X. Recommendations

Proposals for strengthening the human rights treaty body system

44. The fifteenth meeting of chairpersons reaffirmed the points of agreement concluded at the second inter-committee meeting held from 18 to 20 June 2003, contained in annex I to the present report. The chairpersons called upon human rights treaty bodies to follow up on those recommendations and to report on their implementation at the sixteenth meeting in June 2004.

45. The chairpersons underlined the necessity of providing sufficient financial and human resources to treaty bodies to enable the measures to strengthen the human rights treaty body system recommended by the second inter-committee meeting and the fifteenth meeting of chairpersons to be implemented.

46. The chairpersons also recommended that OHCHR and the Division for the Advancement of Women should explore ways and means of strengthening collaboration and coordination, in particular with regard to technical assistance and support to States parties, in order to ensure effective implementation of the relevant recommendations of the second inter-committee meeting.

Lists of issues and pre-sessional working groups

47. Noting that States parties had underlined the usefulness of the provision by treaty bodies of lists of issues and questions prior to the examination of States parties' reports, the fifteenth meeting of chairpersons recommended that treaty bodies should harmonize their approaches to pre-sessional working groups and lists of issues.

48. The chairpersons also recommended that each treaty body should convene a pre-sessional working group to draft such lists of issues and questions. The working group should meet sufficiently in advance so that the State party concerned might have adequate time to provide written replies. The Chairpersons also recommended that the pre-sessional working group should include, as far as possible, the individual country rapporteurs responsible for each of the States parties' reports to be considered at the session.

49. The meeting of chairpersons further recommended that when drafting lists of issues, treaty bodies should focus on requesting information on priority concerns and new developments and, in the case of periodic reports, on the implementation of concluding observations/comments.

Inter-committee meeting

50. Noting that the inter-committee meeting provided a valuable forum for discussion and the opportunity to develop a consistent and coherent approach by treaty bodies to substantive human rights issues, the chairpersons recommended that the inter-committee meeting should be convened annually, immediately prior to the annual meeting of chairpersons, and that the two meetings should be convened within the same one-week period. The chairpersons also recommended that the agenda of the inter-committee meeting should be devoted to specific substantive issues that affected all treaty bodies. In line with the recommendation of the second inter-committee, the

chairpersons recommended that the third inter-committee meeting in 2004 should examine draft guidelines for the expanded core document.

51. The meeting of chairpersons recommended that the meeting of chairpersons should focus on technical and organizational issues and maintain responsibility for dialogue with States parties, the Commission on Human Rights, the Subcommission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and other partners, including United Nations entities and NGOs.

Secretary-General's study on violence against children

52. The chairpersons recommended that treaty bodies should develop procedures to allow them to contribute actively to the Secretary-General's study on violence against children. They also encouraged the independent expert to meet with all the treaty bodies in order to keep them abreast of the progress of the study.

Cooperation with the Commission and the Subcommission

53. The chairpersons recommended continued development of cooperation with the Expanded Bureau of the Commission on Human Rights and the Chairperson of the Subcommission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights.

54. The chairpersons welcomed the invitation extended to them to participate in the fifty-ninth session of the Commission on Human Rights. They recommended that the Commission should consider the possibility of issuing invitations to the chairpersons to attend each session. They also recommended that the Commission consider including an interactive dialogue with chairpersons on the agenda of the sixtieth session. They furthermore recommended that consideration should be given to the provision of resources to support their attendance at the sixtieth session of the Commission.

Cooperation with special rapporteurs

55. The chairpersons noted the value of cooperation between treaty bodies and special procedures mandate holders of the Commission on Human Rights, and recommended that treaty bodies consider appointing a liaison for relevant special rapporteurs in order to enhance collaboration.

Press releases

56. The chairpersons noted the concerns expressed regarding the accuracy of press releases. They recommended that the Department of Public Information consider noting in its press releases that press releases were not official transcripts of the dialogue with States parties and did not reflect the opinion of the treaty body concerned. They recommended that each treaty body implement measures to enhance the accuracy of press releases.

Honorariums

57. The chairpersons recommended that treaty body experts of all committees receive an adequate honorarium.

Notes

[1] See also the recommendation of the tenth meeting of special rapporteurs/representatives, independent experts and chairpersons of working groups of the special procedures of the Commission on Human Rights and of the advisory services programme (E/CN.4/2004/4, para. 76).

Annex I

Report of the second inter-committee meeting of human rights treaty bodies

(Geneva, 18-20 June 2003)

I. Introduction

1. The second inter-committee meeting of the human rights treaty bodies was held at the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Geneva from 17 to 20 June 2003. The meeting was held pursuant to the request of the Secretary-General, in his report entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change", that the High Commissioner should consult with treaty bodies on new streamlined reporting procedures under the human rights treaties and submit recommendations thereon by September 2003.[a]

2. The following members of the human rights treaty bodies attended the meeting:

(a) Human Rights Committee: Abdelfattah Amor (Chairperson), Hipólito Solari-Yrigoyen, Maxwell Yalden;

(b) Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: Virginia Bonoan-Dandan (Chairperson), Eibe Riedel, Philippe Texier;

(c) Committee on the Rights of the Child: Jakob Egbert Doek (Chairperson), Marilia Sardenberg;

(d) Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women: Feride Acar (Chairperson), Cees Flinterman, Heisoo Shin;

(e) Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination: Ion Diaconu (Chairperson), Régis de Gouttes, Linos Alexandre Sicilianos;

(f) Committee against Torture: Peter Burns (Chairperson), Ole Vedel Rasmussen.

3. The meeting was opened by the Chief of the Treaties and Commission Branch, OHCHR. She explained that the inter-committee meeting had been convened during the current year, instead of the following year as originally scheduled, in order to provide treaty bodies with an opportunity to provide input into the process launched by the Secretary-General in his report. In addition to considering progress in implementing the recommendations of the first inter-committee meeting, the meeting was to discuss the Secretary-General's ideas that (a) the committees should craft a more coordinated approach to their activities and standardize their varied reporting requirements and (b) that each State should be allowed to produce a single report summarizing its adherence to the full range of international human rights treaties to which it is a party. She drew attention to the background document prepared by the secretariat (HRI/ICM/2003/3 and Add.1) as well as the report of a brainstorming meeting on reform of the human rights treaty body system held in Malbun, Liechtenstein, from 4 to 7 May 2003 (HRI/ICM/2003/4-HRI/MC/2003/4).

4. Jakob Egbert Doek was elected Chairperson-Rapporteur.

II. Follow-up to previous recommendations and review of recent developments

5. The Chairperson of the Human Rights Committee reported that most of the recommendations of the first inter-committee meeting had been implemented or discussed during the past year. Beginning with its seventy-fifth session in July 2002, the Committee had introduced a system of country report task forces, consisting of four to six members, to improve the lists of issues and the quality of the dialogue between the Committee and the State party under review. The task forces were responsible for formulating the list of issues, taking the lead in conducting dialogue with the State party and, as necessary, assisting the Special Rapporteur on follow-up to concluding observations. A systematic procedure to follow up concluding observations was now applied, to which States parties were responding well.

6. The Chairperson of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women reported that the Committee had undertaken a comprehensive review of its working methods and had adopted new reporting guidelines, including page limitations on the reports of States parties. New modalities of organizing the dialogue with States parties presenting periodic reports had been introduced that included time limits for speakers. As a result of an exceptional session of the Committee held in August 2002, significant inroads had been made into the backlog of reports awaiting review. A meeting between the Committee and States that had not ratified to the Convention had been convened during the twenty-eighth session in January 2003 to promote ratification. The Committee was engaged in efforts to encourage the submission of overdue reports and it would meet with States parties whose reports were overdue at its upcoming session in June/July 2003. The Committee had not yet decided to consider the implementation of the Convention in States parties in the absence of a report. The Committee was open to collaboration with other treaty bodies in elaborating general comments/recommendations and had held discussions with the Chairperson of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on that committee's draft general comment on article 3.

7. The Chairperson of the Committee against Torture indicated that, beginning with its next session, the Committee would formulate a list of issues and questions to be sent in advance to reporting States. It had also established a working group to consider approaches to non-reporting States and it had been agreed that, in future, the Committee would deal with the implementation of the Convention in the State party in the absence of a report. It had also invited States parties with outstanding reporting obligations to combine several reports in a single document. The Committee had convened a successful meeting with States parties during its last session and had also adopted guidelines regulating the relationship between the Committee and the subcommittee to be established under the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture adopted by the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session following its entry into force.

8. The Chairperson of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination reported that the Committee's working methods were being reviewed. The Committee would meet informally with States parties during 2003 and it had also requested country briefs on States parties that were presenting reports. Currently, lists of issues and questions were not formulated by the Committee, as there was no provision for the Committee to meet in a pre-sessional working group. The Committee had the power to solicit additional information from States parties at any

time, and that information was reviewed outside the regular reporting cycle. The fact that the Committee met in parallel with the sessions of the Commission on Human Rights and of the Subcommission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights had provided an opportunity for close cooperation between the Committee and those bodies. The Committee was currently questioning the value of press conferences and was seeking to address the concerns of some States parties with respect to press releases relating to Committee meetings.

9. The Chairperson of the Committee on the Rights of the Child explained that the membership of the Committee had recently been expanded from 10 to 18, following the entry into force of an amendment to the Convention. He stressed the efforts being made by the Committee to produce specific and practical concluding observations, and indicated that in the formulation of concluding observations, the conclusions of other treaty bodies were considered and frequently drawn upon. He also noted that the Committee's process of preparing general comments was open and participatory. The Committee had strengthened its efforts to ensure reporting by States parties. Six letters had been transmitted to States that had yet not reported, resulting in the submission of four reports and the notification by one State party that its report was in preparation. The Committee had not yet considered a report in the absence of a delegation. The Committee considered national as well as international press coverage to be essential in promoting implementation and was considering ways in which press attention could be heightened. In view of the almost universal acceptance of the treaty and the significant degree of compliance with reporting obligations, a large number of reports had still to be reviewed by the Committee. The Committee was currently considering the option of meeting in two subgroups or chambers in order to address the backlog of reports awaiting review and to absorb the new burden on the Committee arising from the submission of reports under the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on children and armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

10. Reporting on behalf of the Chairperson of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Vice-Chairperson of the Committee, Eibe Riedel, noted the ongoing efforts of the Committee to improve its working methods with regard to the dialogue with States parties and the elaboration of action-oriented recommendations. The Committee was very supportive of the idea of joint statements or general comments/recommendations with other treaty bodies to ensure consistent jurisprudence, and the Vice-Chairperson drew attention to discussions which had taken place with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on the idea of a joint general comment on article 3 of the Covenant. The Committee was concerned about States parties that failed to report or whose reports were significantly overdue as well as those that did not report on all their territories. In the Committee's experience, the review of the implementation of the Covenant in the absence of the report had often led to the submission of late reports. The Vice-Chairperson noted the presentation of an implementation report on Brazil by a coalition of approximately 300 civil society organizations and public institutions, which had encouraged the State party to present its report. He pointed to the difficulties States parties experienced in relation to the collection of disaggregated and comparative data and drew attention to the establishment of benchmarks in the Committee's recent general comments. The Committee was considering the introduction of a system whereby individual States parties would be called upon to establish benchmarks which they would communicate to the Committee, to serve as

the basis of future reports. The Committee was also considering nominating a special rapporteur to follow up concluding observations. The Committee was appreciative of NGO participation and also conveyed NGO information to States parties.

III. The Secretary-General's ideas on strengthening the human rights treaty body system

11. The inter-committee meeting discussed the ideas put forward by the Secretary-General in his report, in particular those relating to enhancing implementation of human rights obligations at the national level and strengthening the human rights treaty body system, as well as the report of the Malbun meeting. It decided to focus on a number of issues: ensuring consistency in treaty body practice, including with respect to background information on States parties to be provided by the secretariat to committees; joint or parallel general comments/recommendations; the role of national human rights institutions in the reporting process; the Secretary-General's ideas on reporting to human rights treaty bodies; and non-reporting. Other issues, including capacity-building for reporting and follow-up to and dissemination of concluding observations/comments, were also considered.

Consistency in treaty body practice

12. Participants underlined the importance of consistency in the practice of treaty bodies and made recommendations relating to the information that the secretariat should provide as background information for the consideration of reports. They agreed that although the State party report formed the basis for the consideration of the implementation of human rights in that State party, other information, including from United Nations entities and NGOs, was valuable in enhancing the knowledge of committees with respect to the situation at the national level. A country-specific summary including information from other treaty bodies, special procedures of the Commission on Human Rights and other human rights mechanisms should be prepared by the secretariat. Where the respective committee so decided, the summary could also include information from United Nations entities, national human rights institutions and NGOs. Participants underlined the importance of information available to the special procedures mandates holders and suggested that ways and means of deepening cooperation between the treaty bodies and those mechanisms should be explored. United Nations entities were also encouraged to engage more systematically with human rights treaty bodies, and it was suggested that treaty bodies should consider the nomination of members to act as liaison persons with specific United Nations entities. NGOs were called upon to continue to provide more timely information, including in languages other than English.

13. Participants noted that although some treaty bodies referred to the concluding observations/comments of other treaty bodies in their concluding observations/comments, others had chosen not to do so. While some participants considered that cross-referencing of concluding observations/comments might compromise the autonomous and independent nature of individual treaty bodies, most considered that cross-referencing underlined the indivisible nature of human rights and would ensure consistency of interpretation. In that context, some participants took the view that cross-referencing should extend to the standards

developed by other international and regional human rights mechanisms, such as the International Labour Organization, the African Union, the Council of Europe and the Organization of American States, as well as decisions taken by their supervisory organs, and other bodies as well. It was also suggested that concluding observations/comments should include reference to the outcome of United Nations global conferences. At the same time, it was noted that since concluding observations/comments should be useful at many levels, including for judges, lawyers, parliaments, the media, NGOs and national human rights institutions, they should be short, operational and as non-technical as possible. In that regard, while cross-referencing was appropriate in some cases, it might be more useful for individual treaty bodies to repeat the formulations of other treaty bodies in their concluding observations/comments.

Joint or parallel general comments/recommendations

14. Emphasizing the importance of consistent jurisprudence across treaty bodies, participants considered modalities of cooperation and collaboration by treaty bodies with respect to general comments/recommendations. Consultation among treaty bodies on topics for general comments/recommendations and circulation of drafts of these documents for comment by other treaty bodies were encouraged. As the competence to formulate general comments/recommendations was devolved on individual treaty bodies, rather than treaty bodies as a whole, it was considered that joint general comments/recommendations might be outside the legal competence of the treaty bodies. Harmonization in that context might also be difficult because of the different working methods of the committees.

15. Support was expressed for the adoption of general comments/recommendations by two or more committees in parallel. Parallel general comments/recommendations could be formulated with regard to issues of concern to more than one treaty body, such as non-reporting or reservations, although such comments on substantive issues could also be considered, in particular where the wording of the relevant articles in the treaties was identical or very similar.

National human rights institutions

16. Participants underlined the importance of national human rights institutions and their role in the system of reporting under human rights treaties. It was noted that several committees had adopted general comments on the role of national human rights institutions, and participants encouraged their creation and participation in the reporting process and, in particular, in monitoring the implementation of concluding observations/comments.

Secretary-General's proposals for strengthening the human rights treaty system

17. The inter-committee meeting noted that the Secretary-General's ideas on the human rights treaty system, in particular, the suggestion that each State should be allowed to produce a single report summarizing its adherence to the full range of international human rights treaties to which it was a party, were aimed at strengthening the human rights treaty system and the capacity of States to implement human rights at the national level. Participants indicated that each of the human rights treaty bodies had discussed the feasibility of the single report and, noting that such an approach had also been put forward by the Office of Internal

Oversight Services, had concluded that preparation of a single report would be a complex, perhaps unmanageable exercise. It was also believed that a single report would result in either very lengthy reports or superficial and summary reporting. Some treaty bodies had expressed concern that a single report could lead to the marginalization of treaty-specific issues. It was also suggested that a single report might be a long-term objective, which could be appropriate in a context of a single treaty body.

18. Although some participants considered that a pilot study on the feasibility of a single report might be appropriate, all considered that the current focus should be on encouraging ratification, withdrawal of reservations and implementation of human rights treaties. They also took the view that the overarching concerns and objectives of the Secretary-General, prime among which was ensuring implementation of the full range of human rights obligations by States parties, could be addressed more effectively by requiring them to submit an expanded core document, which would be regularly updated. In addition, States parties would be required to submit treaty-specific targeted periodic reports. The inter-committee meeting recommended that the secretariat prepare draft guidelines for an expanded core document, taking into account the existing reporting guidelines for human rights reporting and congruent or overlapping provisions in the seven core human rights treaties. The draft guidelines would be circulated to treaty bodies for comment and submitted to the third inter-committee meeting for consideration in 2004.

Non-reporting

19. The inter-committee meeting agreed that it was important that treaty bodies adopt a consistent policy and approach to States parties that failed to comply with their reporting obligations. A number of treaty bodies had taken the approach of reviewing the implementation of their respective treaties in States parties with long-overdue reports in the absence of a report, and it was agreed that all treaty bodies should take that approach as a last resort and subject to transparent criteria and procedures.

Other issues

20. Other issues addressed by the inter-committee meeting included the dissemination of concluding observations/comments and other treaty body outputs. The introduction by OHCHR of an electronic listserve to provide for timely and wide dissemination of this output was praised and further efforts were encouraged. The meeting also encouraged each treaty body to consider establishing formal procedures to follow up the implementation of concluding observations/comments, particularly in the light of the response by States parties to the procedure introduced by the Human Rights Committee. OHCHR and the Department for the Advancement of Women were urged to continue and strengthen capacity-building for States parties in the implementation of human rights treaties, reporting and follow-up to recommendations of committees.

21. The inter-committee meeting discussed the possibility of those treaty bodies with a large membership meeting in subgroups or in parallel chambers, including to consider the reports of States parties, in particular in the light of the backlog of reports awaiting review which affected those committees whose treaties had been ratified by a large number of States.

22. Issues relating to documentation and translation were also discussed. It was stressed that the work of treaty bodies was greatly facilitated by the timely availability of documentation in all working languages of the Committee.

IV. Dialogue with non-governmental organizations

23. Representatives of the International Federation of Human Rights Leagues (FIDH), Human Rights Watch (HRW), the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) and International Women's Rights Action Watch-Asia Pacific (IWRAW-AP) presented their views to the inter-committee meeting with regard to the strengthening of the human rights treaty body system, with FIDH, HRW and ICJ providing a joint paper on the matter that was also supported by other NGOs. IWRAW-AP also circulated a position paper.

24. NGOs stressed that their emphasis was on enhancing the work of human rights treaty bodies. In that regard, reporting was critical for national-level implementation and follow-up and several underlying issues affected reporting by States parties, including lack of political will. Allowing States parties to prepare and present a single report on the implementation of all the human rights obligations to which they were party would not provide the framework for reporting of sufficient specificity. Such a report would not comply with the periodicity for reporting envisaged in most of the treaties and, in the light of its complex nature, might not reduce delays in reporting. NGOs saw some potential in the idea of focused reports, but suggested that the periodicity governing focused reports should be shorter than that for comprehensive reports. Focused reports should not entirely replace comprehensive reports, which should continue to be required by treaty bodies on a regular basis. An expansion of the current core document to incorporate other information of common interest to treaty bodies could also contribute to the modernization of the system. However, the updating of any expanded core document should be mandatory in order to keep the information current.

25. Harmonization of procedures was called for, especially with respect to non-reporting, follow-up and urgent actions, with procedures being based on the best practices of treaty bodies. The link between the process of review by treaty bodies at the international level and national-level follow-up was emphasized, and it was suggested that efforts should be strengthened to ensure that the potential of the reporting cycle to encourage national-level advocacy was exploited as much as possible. It was also pointed out that lack of clarity with respect to the meaning of the rights in human rights treaties limited understanding of the measures required to ensure de facto implementation of human rights obligations. Lack of data and statistics, as well as political will, led to delayed reporting or non-reporting.

V. Points of agreement

Consistency

26. In the light of the principle of the universality, indivisibility and interdependence of human rights, the inter-committee meeting emphasized the need to ensure consistency in the examination of reports by all treaty bodies. To that end, the meeting recommended that the secretariat ensure that, in addition

to the State party report, the same basic information was provided to all treaty bodies.

27. In order to enhance consistency, it was further recommended that the secretariat provide, to all members of the relevant treaty body prior to the examination of a State party's report, the concluding observations/recommendations of other committees and relevant decisions on individual communications/complaints, including from regional organizations when appropriate, from the preceding three years. Where the State party had been examined by another treaty body within the previous three months, the meeting recommended that the secretariat provide, where available, the summary records of that meeting.

28. The inter-committee meeting furthermore recommended that, where appropriate, committees should refer to relevant concluding observations/comments of other treaty bodies either during the dialogue or in their own concluding comments.

Country information used in the consideration of reports

29. The inter-committee meeting emphasized that the State party report formed the basis for the consideration of the implementation of human rights instruments in that State party. Additional information from non-State sources was nevertheless useful for enhancing the treaty bodies' understanding of the situation within a country, and the meeting welcomed the additional information which was often provided by other human rights mechanisms, OHCHR, the Division for the Advancement of Women, United Nations entities and NGOs.

30. The meeting encouraged greater engagement by specialized agencies and funds and programmes of the United Nations in the reporting process at both the national and the international level. It recommended that each treaty body designate a focal point to liaise with key relevant specialized agencies.

31. The meeting recommended that the secretariat should systematically summarize country-specific information in order to facilitate the work of experts, and that such a summary should consistently include relevant information from other treaty bodies, special procedures of the Commission on Human Rights and other human rights mechanisms. Where appropriate, and in accordance with the decision of each committee, information from specialized agencies and United Nations programmes, regional or intergovernmental organizations, including the World Bank and other international financial institutions, national and international NGOs and national human rights institutions should also be included.

The role of national human rights institutions in reporting

32. The inter-committee meeting emphasized the constructive role that national human rights institutions could play in the human rights reporting process, at both international and national levels. It encouraged all national human rights institutions established in accordance with the Paris Principles to contribute independently, where appropriate, to the reporting process under international human rights instruments and to monitor the government reports

to international treaty bodies. The meeting also encouraged national human rights institutions to actively monitor the implementation of concluding observations/comments of treaty bodies at the national level.

Capacity-building

33. The inter-committee meeting agreed that capacity-building was important for effective national reporting and recommended that OHCHR, the Division for the Advancement of Women and treaty bodies should coordinate the consideration of possible objectives and strategies that could contribute to the effectiveness of technical cooperation. It also recommended that capacity-building efforts undertaken by OHCHR and the Department, United Nations agencies and programmes and NGOs, in particular those relating to follow-up to recommendations of treaty bodies, should be expanded and adequately funded.

Joint or parallel general comments/recommendations

34. The inter-committee meeting agreed that general comments/recommendations and the process of their elaboration provided opportunities for reflecting the holistic nature of the treaty body system. The meeting recommended that treaty bodies strengthen their efforts to exchange information and opinions on general comments/recommendations in order to ensure jurisprudential consistency among treaty bodies with respect to substantive issues.

35. On substantive issues, where the language of provisions of different treaties was virtually identical, treaty bodies should cooperate in the elaboration of general comments/recommendations, which would then be adopted by each of those committees in parallel.

36. The inter-committee meeting agreed that common issues could be the subject of general comments/recommendations adopted by treaty bodies in parallel. The meeting considered that a general comment on non-reporting should be adopted by each committee in parallel.

Dissemination of concluding observations/comments

37. The inter-committee meeting welcomed the secretariat's creation of a public listserve to facilitate the dissemination of concluding observations/comments electronically after each session. It recommended that the secretariat expand the listserve to include the work of other human rights mechanisms, in particular reports of the special mechanisms of the Commission on Human Rights.

Proposals for strengthening the human rights treaty body system

38. The inter-committee meeting agreed that it shared the overriding concerns and objectives of the Secretary-General expressed in his report, in particular with regard to strengthening the implementation of human rights obligations at the national level. The meeting agreed that the proposal that each State should be allowed to produce a single report summarizing its adherence to the full range of international human rights treaties to which it was a party would not adequately meet those overriding concerns and objectives.

39. The inter-committee meeting considered that those concerns and objectives could be met more appropriately by requiring States parties to human rights treaties to prepare an expanded core document that would be regularly updated, as well as treaty-specific targeted periodic reports to individual treaty bodies.

40. The inter-committee meeting recommended that the secretariat prepare draft guidelines for an expanded core document for consideration by each committee and adoption by the third inter-committee meeting in 2004. The guidelines should emphasize substantive human rights issues relating to provisions in all or several human rights treaties.

41. Taking into account the specificity of each treaty, the inter-committee meeting also recommended that the secretariat examine the possibilities for greater harmonization of the reporting guidelines for each of the treaty bodies.

Follow-up

42. In the light of the initiatives taken by the Human Rights Committee and the Committee against Torture, the inter-committee meeting recommended that all treaty bodies should examine the possibility of introducing procedures to follow up their recommendations.

Non-reporting

43. Taking into account the relevant provisions of the respective treaties and rules of procedure, the inter-committee meeting recommended that each committee adopt appropriate procedures to examine the situation of human rights in a State party whose reports were long overdue and that had not responded to reminders of its reporting obligation. In that regard, all committees should adopt the following incremental and graduated measures to encourage submission of overdue reports:

(a) At each session, the secretariat shall notify the committee of all cases of non-submission of reports. In such cases, the committee shall transmit to the State party concerned a reminder concerning the submission of such reports;

(b) At each session, the secretariat shall provide the committee with a list of all reports that are substantially overdue. In such cases, the committee may notify the States parties concerned that the implementation of the treaty will be considered at a designated session and request the State party to indicate before the following session when it will submit the overdue report;

(c) The Committee shall also inform the State party of the availability of technical assistance with respect to reporting from OHCHR and the Division for the Advancement of Women;

(d) If, at the following session, the State party has not responded, the Committee may schedule the examination of the situation of human rights of the State party for consideration in the absence of a report.

Notes

[a] See A/57/387, chap. II.B, paras. 55-57.

Annex II

Agenda of the fifteenth meeting of chairpersons

(Adopted on 23 June 2003)

1. Opening of the meeting and election of officers.
2. Adoption of the agenda.
3. Organizational and other matters.
4. Follow-up to the recommendations of the fourteenth meeting of chairpersons.
5. Review of recent developments relating to the work of the treaty bodies.
6. Status of the 2003 Annual Appeal of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the 2002-2004 Programme to Support Human Rights Organs and Treaty Bodies.
7. Strengthening support to and enhancing the effectiveness of the treaty bodies.
8. National-level implementation of treaty body recommendations.
9. Cooperation with the Commission on Human Rights and the Subcommission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights.
10. Informal consultations with States.
11. Fifth joint meeting with the tenth meeting of special rapporteurs/representatives, experts and chairpersons of working groups of the special procedures of the Commission on Human Rights.
12. Joint meeting with the tenth meeting of special rapporteurs/representatives, experts and chairpersons of working groups of the special procedures of the Commission on Human Rights and the independent expert for the United Nations study on violence against children.
13. Adoption of the report and setting of dates for the sixteenth meeting of chairpersons.

Annex III

Agenda of the informal consultations between the fifteenth meeting of chairpersons of human rights treaty bodies and States parties

(Adopted on 26 June 2003)

Item 1. Strengthening of the human rights reporting system

(a) Secretary-General's ideas on streamlining human rights reporting;

(b) Other approaches, including an expanded core document and targeted periodic reports;

(c) Preparation of States parties' reports and the enhancement of human rights reporting at the national level;

(d) Measures to encourage reporting;

(e) Dialogue with States parties;

(f) Follow-up procedures to treaty body recommendations.

Item 2. Methods of work related to:

(a) Communications;

(b) Inquiries;

(c) Urgent action procedures.

Annex IV

Participants in the fifteenth meeting of chairpersons

A. Non-governmental organizations (meeting on 24 June 2003)

Antoine Madelin; Fédération internationale des ligues des droits de l'Homme (FIDH)

Loubna Freih; Human Rights Watch (HRW)

Rachel Brett; Quaker UN office

Tania Balowin-Pask; Amnesty International

Patricia Scannella; Amnesty International

Anna-Karin Holmlund; Amnesty International

Carla Covarrubias; Amnesty International

Edouard Delaplace; Association for the Prevention of Torture (APT)

Geneviève Jourdan; World Citizens

Catherine Ferry; Organisation mondiale contre la torture (OMCT)

Christophe Schmachtel; International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)

Rea Chiongson; International Women's Rights Action Watch (IWRAW Asia Pacific)

Hassiba Hadj Sahraoui; International Commission of Jurists (ICJ)

A. Flores; Anti-Racism Information Service (ARIS)

Carol Dolorier de Haller; ARIS

Atsuko Tanaka; International Movement Against all Forms of Discrimination and Racism (IMADR)

B. United Nations departments, specialized agencies, funds and programmes (meeting on 25 June 2003)

Asako Hattori; World Health Organization (WHO)

Aida Gevorgyan; WHO

Martin Oelz; International Labour Office

Lee Swepston; International Labour Office

Christoph Bierwirth; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

Marie Heuzé; United Nations Information Service in Geneva (DPI)

Thierry Potvin; DPI

Yvonne Donders; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

Vladimir Volodin; UNESCO

Lesley Miller; United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

Ana Angarita; United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

Miriam Maluwa; Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)

Gesa Kupfer; UNAIDS

C. States parties
(meeting on 26 June 2003)

Albania
Ms. Pranvera Goxhi, First Secretary

Australia
Mr. Mike Smith, Ambassador and Permanent Representative
Ms. Amanda Gorely, Counsellor and Deputy Permanent Representative

Austria
Ms. Elisabeth Ellison-Kramer, Counsellor

Barbados
Mr. Matthew Wilson, First Secretary

Belarus
Mr. Vladimir Malevich, Deputy Permanent Representative
Ms. Ina Vasileuskaya, First Secretary

Belgium
Mr. Leopold Merckx, Deputy Permanent Representative

Benin
Ms. Rosemonde Adjanonhoun, First Secretary

Bosnia and Herzegovina
Mr. Milos Vukasinovic, Ambassador and Permanent Representative

Brazil
Ms. Claudia Maciel, Second Secretary

Bulgaria
Mr. Dimitar Philipov, Deputy Permanent Representative

Canada
Ms. Deirdre Kent, First Secretary

Chile
Mr. Patricio Utreras, First Secretary

Colombia
Ms. Ana María Prieto Abad, Minister Counsellor

Costa Rica
Ms. Carmen Isabel Claramunt-Garro, Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative
Mr. Christian Guillermet-Fernandez, Minister Counsellor

Croatia
Branko Socanac, Minister Counsellor

Cuba
Mr. Jorge Ferrer, Counsellor

Cyprus
Ms. Helena Mina, Second Secretary

Czech Republic
Mr. Alexander Slabý, Ambassador and Permanent Representative
Mr. Lukás Machon, Third Secretary

Denmark
Ms. Eva Grambye, Second Secretary
Mr. Albert Birnbaum, Intern

Dominican Republic
Mr. Ysset Román Maldonado, Minister Counsellor

Egypt
Mr. Mohamed Loutfy, Third Secretary

Estonia
Ms. Kirke Kraav, Third Secretary

Finland
Mr. Erik af Hällström, First Secretary

France
Ms. Catherine Calothy, Counsellor

Georgia
Mr. Alexander Chikvaidze, Ambassador and Permanent Representative

Germany
Mr. Robert Dieter, First Secretary

Ghana
Mr. Sylvester Jude Parker-Allotey, Minister Counsellor and Deputy Permanent Representative

Greece
Mr. Takis Sarris, Deputy Permanent Representative
Ms. Eleni Petroula, Counsellor

Guatemala
Ms. Carla Rodriguez, Deputy Permanent Representative

Honduras
Ms. Gracibel Bu Figueroa, Counsellor

Hungary
Ms. Katalin Csima Szaloki, Second Secretary

India
Mr. Debabrata Saha, Deputy Permanent Representative
Mr. Anurag Srivastava, Third Secretary

Indonesia
Mr. Lasro Simbolon, First Secretary
Mr. Agung C. Sumirat, Third Secretary

Ireland
Mr. Brian Cahalane, First Secretary

Israel
Ms. Teizu Guluma, Adviser

Italy
Mr. Marco Conticelli, First Counsellor

Kazakhstan
Ms. Munira Artykbekova, First Secretary

Latvia
Ms. Kristine Malinovska, Counsellor
Mr. Johnny Ibrahim, First Secretary

Libyan Arab Jamahiriya
Mr. Murad Hamaima, Counsellor

Lithuania
Ms. Llona Petrikiene, Second Secretary

Luxembourg
Mr. Marc Godefroid, First Secretary

Madagascar
Ms. Clarah Andrianjaka, Counsellor

Mali
Mr. Sekou Kasse, First Counsellor

Mexico
Ms. Elía del Carmen Sosa Nishizaki, First Secretary

Morocco
Mr. Azzeddine Farhane, Counsellor

Nepal
Mr. Gopal Bahadur Thapa, Minister Counsellor

Netherlands
Mr. Henk Cor van der Kwast, Counsellor

Norway
Ms. Ingrid Sylow, Adviser, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

New Zealand
Ms. Jillian Dempster, First Secretary

Paraguay
Mr. Francisco Barreiro, First Secretary

Peru
Mr. Juan Pablo Vegas Torres, Counsellor

Portugal
Mr. Pedro Alves, Secretary

Romania
Mr. Cristian Badescu, Second Secretary

Serbia and Montenegro
Ms. Marina Ivanovic, Second Secretary

Slovakia
Ms. Barbara Illková, Counsellor and Deputy Permanent Representative

Spain
Mr. Marcos Gómez Martínez, Counsellor

Sri Lanka
Mr. Senarath Dissanayake, Second Secretary
Mr. Sugeeshwara Gunaratna, Second Secretary

Sweden
Mr. Magnus Andersson, First Secretary

Switzerland
Mr. Jean-Daniel Vigny, Minister

Thailand
Ms. Phantipha Iamsudha, First Secretary

Turkey
Ms. Özden Sav, Counsellor

Uruguay
Ms. Alejandra de Bellis, First Secretary

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
Mr. Paul Bentall, Second Secretary
Mr. Bob Last, Counsellor

United States of America
Mr. Jeffrey De Laurentis, Counsellor
Mr. Joel Danies, First Secretary

Venezuela
Mr. Vladimir González, Second Secretary

Viet Nam
Mr. Nguyen Nang Tien, Counsellor

Zimbabwe
Mr. Felix Maonera, Counsellor

United Nations A/58/351

General Assembly

Distr.: General
5 September 2003

Original: English

Fifty-eighth session
Item 60 of the provisional agenda*
Strengthening of the United Nations system

Status of implementation of actions described in the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change"

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on the implementation of the reform measures as considered in General Assembly resolution 57/300. The present report, prepared in response to that request, is an overview of the implementation. It should be read in conjunction with several subsidiary reports, prepared pursuant to specific provisions of resolution 57/300: on the intergovernmental review of the medium-term plan and the programme budget (A/57/786); on improving the performance of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management; management improvements in the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights; on the review of technical cooperation in the United Nations (A/58/382); on improvements to the current process of planning and budgeting; and on enhanced cooperation between the United Nations and all relevant partners, in particular the private sector (A/58/227).

Further progress reports on the reform of the Department of Public Information will also be submitted to the Committee on Information at its twenty-sixth session in 2004, and on various elements of human resources management reform, to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. A report on strengthening the system of internal justice will be submitted to the General Assembly during the first resumption of its fifty-eighth session following the main part of the session. The annual report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization also reflects the changes to departmental activities over the last year.

* A/58/150.

03-49289 (E) 300903

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I. Introduction

1. In his report entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change" (A/57/387 and Corr.1), the Secretary-General made a series of proposals under several broad headings:

(a) The section headed "Doing What Matters", included a commitment to align the activities of the Organization with agreed priorities and to reflect this alignment in a thoroughly revised programme budget proposal. Other commitments related to efforts to strengthen the Organization's work in the areas of human rights and public information;

(b) "Serving Member States better" focused on implementing a more integrated approach to planning and managing meetings and documentation, as well as proposals to improve the Organization's reporting;

(c) "Working better together", explored ways to improve coordination, both among the component parts of the United Nations in developing countries and between the Organization and civil society;

(d) "Allocating resources to priorities" described changes needed to streamline the Organization's complicated and labour-intensive system of budgeting and planning;

(e) "The Organization and its people: investing in excellence" put forward additional measures to ensure that the United Nations can count on an able, versatile and well-managed workforce.

2. In its resolution 57/300 of 20 December 2002, the General Assembly provided guidance on the implementation of the actions set out in the Secretary-General's report, and in implementing these actions, the Secretary-General has taken into account the views expressed by Member States in their deliberations. Additional deliberations and guidance on specific elements of the reform package are expected from the General Assembly during its fifty-eighth session and from the Assembly's subsidiary bodies.

II. Aligning activities with priorities

3. In paragraph 4 of its resolution 57/300, the General Assembly welcomed the intention of the Secretary-General to submit a programme budget that fully justified the resource requirements and better reflected the priorities laid out in the medium-term plan for 2002-2005, the Millennium Declaration and the outcomes of the major international conferences. The budget proposed for the 2004-2005 biennium achieves this in the following ways:

(a) *Increased attention to development issues*. Monitoring and follow-up relating to the Millennium Development Goals are being enhanced; a unit to oversee financing for development has been established; resources dealing with the African continent have been consolidated; and modest additional resources for work on drug control, crime prevention and the promotion of human rights are being requested;

(b) *Significant resource reallocation either within or between sections of the budget*. Some $100 million is shifted between subprogrammes and 810 posts are proposed for redeployment;

(c) *Major reorganization and reallocation of resources* in the Department of Public Information, the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. In addition, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs has been reorganized to incorporate the mandates arising out of the Monterrey International Conference on Financing for Development and to develop a strategic planning capacity;

(d) *Discontinuance of recurrent outputs*. Nine hundred and eleven reports, meetings and other activities of marginal utility are proposed for elimination, in accordance with regulation 5.6 of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation;

(e) *Increased resources allocated to the areas of information and communications technology and staff training*. Some $14 million in additional resources is requested to implement an enhanced information and communication strategy, along with an additional $2 million for staff development and learning programmes.

As a result of improved planning, better coordination and more systematic evaluations, future adjustments to the work programme are likely and will be reflected in subsequent budget exercises.

III. Strengthening human rights

4. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has moved forward with actions laid out in General Assembly resolution 57/300 to improve both its internal management and the services it provides to Member States. Changes have focused on four main areas, as set out below.

Increased support for national human rights capacity-building

5. Concerted efforts are under way to provide an integrated and consistent response to Member States that request support in strengthening their national human rights protection systems. The plan, being developed with other United Nations partners is aimed at encouraging the ratification of human rights treaties, helping integrate human rights into national development plans, assisting in the reform of national legislation and institutions and promoting better awareness of human rights. More detailed information will be provided to the relevant intergovernmental bodies. The protection mandate for monitoring, investigations and reporting will remain the exclusive responsibility of OHCHR and the wider human rights machinery.

Enhanced implementation of human rights treaties

6. Consultations among Member States, treaty bodies, and non-governmental organizations have taken place during recent years to develop closer cooperation and enhance the implementation of the principal human rights treaties. The Commission on Human Rights was briefed on this process. During the second inter-treaty committee meeting, held in 2003, representatives agreed that the preparation of individual treaty body reports helped to create networks and galvanize national

discussion around treaty issues. It was also agreed that national human rights institutions could play a stronger role in both the treaty reporting system and follow-up. Discussions on the idea of a consolidated report for the various treaties are continuing, and individual States parties may wish to adopt such an approach. As an alternative to the consolidated report, some Member States have chosen to expand their core document, which compiles information for all treaty bodies. Although States parties are not legally obliged to submit one, a core document can reduce their reporting burden and avoid the repetition of details contained in each of the treaty body reports. The Secretariat has been requested to prepare draft guidelines for an expanded core document for the third inter-committee meeting, in June 2004. Additional details on this consultative process are available in the report of the Secretary-General on management improvements in the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

7. There is strong support for greater cooperation among treaty bodies and for the better harmonization of their reporting guidelines. All treaty bodies have been urged to adopt specific follow-up procedures and to take measures that would encourage the timely submission of reports and address the backlog issue.

Improving the system of special procedures

8. Steps have been taken in recent years to better support the special procedures and make them more effective. Details were presented to the Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-ninth session (see E/CN.4/2003/124). The steps include:

(a) producing a manual for special rapporteurs;

(b) drafting internal guiding principles regarding working relations between special procedures mandate holders and OHCHR staff;

(c) regular updating of an induction kit for special procedures mandate holders, which would include reporting requirements;

(d) strengthening the support provided by OHCHR through additional human resources and the establishment of a quick response desk.

9. A Special Procedures Branch was established in OHCHR as from 1 May 2003. Since then, OHCHR has initiated consultations on how the special procedure mechanisms can be improved even further, in line with the Secretary-General's recommendations.

10. At a meeting of special procedures mandate holders held in June 2003, it was decided that the following concrete steps would be undertaken with the support, as appropriate, of OHCHR:

(a) strengthened joint initiatives, including joint urgent appeals, statements, press releases and communications;

(b) an analysis of the working methods of the various mandate holders, with a view to identifying good practices;

(c) systematic debriefing between desk officers after country visits in order to facilitate follow-up;

(d) strengthened cooperation with United Nations country teams in the preparation, conduct and follow-up of country visits;

(e) preparation of a feasibility study on ways to enhance the dissemination of findings and recommendations of special procedures;

(f) interaction between special procedures mechanisms and the Counter-Terrorism Committee of the Security Council;

(g) continuous exchange of information and communications between mandate holders;

(h) further strengthening of the interactive dialogue with the Commission on Human Rights.

Management improvements in the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

11. Management improvements over the past year have focused on the implementation of the recommendations of the management review of OHCHR conducted by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (see A/57/488). The details of implementation will be the subject of a separate report to the General Assembly. The reorganization will be described in the updated Secretary-General's bulletin on OHCHR and will reflect efforts to sharpen the policy directions and responsiveness of the Office.

12. Additional changes to the structure, staffing and financing of the Office should improve the management capacity of OHCHR. The principal changes are as follows:

(a) the establishment of two new branches, one on special procedures and the other on external relations;

(b) the rationalization of the system of OHCHR regional representatives;

(c) the initiation of a roster of human rights officers to serve with United Nations peacekeeping missions;

(d) the regularization of OHCHR staff under the 100 series of the Staff Rules;

(e) strengthened financial and budgetary management through the development of a financial/programming database;

(f) a refined system of annual appeals for voluntary contributions and the corresponding annual report on the use of those contributions.

IV. Enhancing public information

13. The past year has seen the implementation of several steps to improve the operations of the Department of Public Information, both at Headquarters and in the field. The Committee on Information has been actively engaged in this process, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 57/300, and has responded positively to the efforts made to strengthen the Department.

Restructuring

14. The major part of the restructuring of the Department of Public Information has now taken place, with the Department's activities divided among three new divisions since November 2002 in accordance with the Secretary-General's

proposals. The transfer of the Cartographic Section to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations awaits consideration by the General Assembly in the context of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005, in accordance with paragraph 16 of its resolution 57/300.

Evaluation

15. With support from the Office of Internal Oversight Services, the Department is developing an annual programme impact review in order to systematically evaluate its activities. This review will involve a regular assessment by programme managers of the performance of communications programmes and services, as well as training to build an institutional capacity for self-evaluation. Results from the first annual programme impact review will be reported to the Committee on Information in 2004.

16. By the end of 2003 the Department will have a set of preliminary performance measures in place, along with baseline data relating to departmental goals. A two-step process for assessing impact will then be undertaken. First, exposure to messages will be measured (e.g., through analysis of press coverage or listeners reached), followed by an assessment of whether audiences responded to the messages in any meaningful way. This exercise will require resources and expertise not currently available to the Department. The involvement of external partners is therefore anticipated.

17. Training to support the Department's new operating model is under way. Most programme managers have now been trained in evaluation techniques, while staff at all levels are undergoing training in measuring the impact and effectiveness of products and activities.

United Nations information centres

18. The Department is working on an action plan, in consultation with Member States, to ensure a seamless transition from the model of United Nations information centres at the national level to the new regional model, while seeking to safeguard the accrued experience, knowledge, institutional memory and partnerships of the national information centres.

19. As a first step, the Secretary-General is proceeding with the establishment of a regional hub in Western Europe. This will entail the closure of the nine national information centres located in countries of the European Union[1] and the creation of a regional hub, by 31 December 2003. The hub will be located in Brussels, subject to the conclusion of an agreement between the Secretariat and the Government of Belgium. The information services located in Geneva and Vienna, which service the Headquarters offices in those cities, will not be affected.

20. The Western European hub will be staffed and resourced to work in all current languages of the European Union and will respond to information needs in the region. The new operating concept will allow the Department to redirect resources to other priorities, including to information centres in developing countries (in accordance with General Assembly resolution 57/130 B of 11 December 2002), strengthening multilingualism on the United Nations web site and the systematic evaluation of the impact of the Department's activities. In 2004, at its twenty-sixth session, the Committee on Information will consider a progress report on the

implementation of the regional hub proposal, with the objective of applying this initiative in other regions.

Libraries management

21. The Steering Committee for the Modernization and Integrated Management of United Nations Libraries was formed in March 2003. The Committee meets quarterly under the chairmanship of the Director, Outreach Division, Department of Public Information, and its members include the head/chief librarians or other representatives of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, the United Nations Office at Geneva, the United Nations Office at Vienna/United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the United Nations Office at Nairobi, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, the regional commissions, United Nations University and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.

22. The Committee has been tasked with developing policies and coordinating operations among all United Nations libraries. Its work plan addresses the following areas:

(a) archival collections of United Nations documents;

(b) bibliographic control of United Nations documents;

(c) collaborative reference services;

(d) collections/resource sharing;

(e) hardware, software and web content;

(f) public relations;

(g) small and field libraries.

23. Examples of the specific initiatives to be completed by late 2003 include the establishment of a multilingual United Nations libraries research gateway on the Internet, the creation of a master list of core areas of specialization at United Nations libraries worldwide and the incorporation of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific as a full partner in the Shared Indexing Programme. A detailed report on this subject will be submitted to the Committee on Information at its twenty-sixth session.

V. Streamlining publications and reports

24. The report on the strengthening of the United Nations outlined several measures to reduce the number of United Nations publications and reports and to improve their coherence, focus and scheduling. This is an area where several tangible improvements have already been achieved, and additional efforts are under way.

Publications

25. The Publications Board was reconstituted as a standard-setting body in February 2003. Its main mandate is to review and determine the policies governing the preparation, distribution and sale of publications, both printed and electronic, as

well as to draft new and revised administrative instructions to implement publications policy.

26. The Board meets on a monthly basis, but performs much of its work through interdepartmental working groups. For example, the interdepartmental Working Group on Internet Matters recently prepared a set of technical guidelines for United Nations Internet publishing. As a follow-up to General Assembly resolution 57/300, a separate Working Group has been established to look into the feasibility and cost of online publications delivery, supplemented by a print-on-demand capability.

27. As an integral part of the preparation of the biennial budget, all publications programmes being proposed by Secretariat entities are now channelled through the relevant Executive Committees. Each Executive Committee has the responsibility to review plans for publication, ensure coherence, avoid duplication and establish clear priorities regarding what is to be published.

28. This past year, the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs pioneered an exercise to coordinate the publication programmes of its members. In the context of the preparation of the 2004-2005 budget, Committee focal points discussed content of publications and in this way were able to enhance collaboration and coherence. This arrangement will continue annually. In addition, there is now an arrangement by which author departments of global and regional surveys and the flagship publications issued by economic and social affairs entities share drafts and consult with each other prior to the issuance of a publication. Information regarding the timing of the issuance of flagship reports is routinely being shared.

29. Overall there has been an 18 per cent decrease in recurrent publications and a 23 per cent decrease in non-recurrent publications over the period 2002/03 to 2004/05. Budget data for 2004/05 indicate 192 discontinued publications and reports.

Reports

30. The confluence of two initiatives — the General Assembly's own efforts to revitalize its work and the Secretary-General's reform proposals — is creating positive momentum for progress in this area. In its resolution 57/300, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to start a consultative process with the President of the Assembly and Chairmen of the Main Committees, with a view to consolidating reports on related subjects, if decided by the Main Committees. In the context of the revitalization of the work of the Assembly, the President of the Assembly held a number of consultations on this question between April and June 2003 with the Chairmen of the Main Committees.

31. The President requested proposals on streamlining the work of the General Assembly, including on the consolidation of reports. Several proposals from the Chairmen and from a number of Member States were received and have now been discussed by the Bureaux of some of the Main Committees. The President presented these proposals at open-ended informal consultations of the plenary on 18 June 2003. Although no specific decisions were taken at that meeting, there was general and strong support for consolidating reports of the Secretary-General on related topics as a means to facilitate debate and reduce documentation.

32. Preliminary efforts by departments to consolidate reports for the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly have resulted in a 13 per cent reduction in the

number of reports. It is the intention of the Secretary-General to request all concerned departments and offices to continue vigorously reviewing their reporting requirements with a view to further consolidating reports, where possible.

33. The review by the Second and Third Committees of their respective programmes of work, and the consideration of issues in a more coordinated manner, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 57/270 B of 23 June 2003, should result in a reduced number of resolutions and of reports requested from the Secretary-General.

34. Another way to reduce the number of reports is to address their frequency. The Secretariat will assist the President of the General Assembly, as well as the Chairmen and other officers of the Main Committees, as requested, in reviewing the agenda of the General Assembly and its Main Committees to identify agenda items that could potentially be considered on a biennial or triennial basis rather than annually.

VI. Managing conferences and meetings

35. The Department of General Assembly and Conference Management has moved forward with the actions identified in document A/57/289 and Corr.1 to improve the overall efficiency and effectiveness of its conference management function. In order to reach the goals of unified conference management policies, methodologies and practices, streamlined operations and enhanced coordination and utilization of resources across all locations, the Department is working with the Office of Internal Oversight Services to develop new policies and work practices.

36. An implementation team composed of representatives of all subprogrammes of the Department has developed an action plan to introduce more efficient workflow processes and migrate to new technologies, as well as to move towards integrated management of all conference-related resources. The initial 10-month implementation phase has yielded tangible positive results in virtually every area of activity of the Department, as follows:

(a) *Conference management*. More cost-effective planning and programming of services has been achieved;

(b) *Better support for the President of the General Assembly*. A draft programme of work for the fifty-eighth session was prepared well ahead of the opening of the session in order to assist the incoming President in the planning of activities, and facilitate the handover process from one presidency to the next;

(c) *Rationalizing the work of the Main Committees*. The programme of work is discussed at an earlier stage to better synchronize it with the issuance of mandated documents;

(d) *Documentation workflow*. A slotting system for document processing has been introduced, and policies relating to length of documents are enforced with more rigour. As a result, over 90 per cent of the reports originating in the Secretariat submitted in the first five months of 2003 were in accordance with the established page limit. Sessional documents are being issued earlier in 2003 than in previous years;

(e) *Budgetary and programmatic discipline*. Strict adherence to results-based budgetary practices has led the Department to keep its expenditures in line with earmarked resources.

37. Following a first positive review by the Assembly in March 2003 of the Department's reform efforts, full reports on the pattern of conferences and improving the performance of the Department of General Assembly and Conference Management will be presented to the Committee on Conferences in September. The proposed 2004/05 budget reflects a number of post redeployments arising from efficiency gains, as well as an increased reliance on technology for documents production and meetings management.

VII. Strengthening the effectiveness of the United Nations presence in developing countries

38. In keeping with General Assembly resolution 57/300, paragraph 22, four principal elements were identified to strengthen the Organization's field presence: common tools and instruments for harmonizing development cooperation programmes; integrated planning and budgeting tools for countries emerging from conflict; common databases and knowledge networks; and strengthening the resident coordinator system.

39. At the request of the Economic and Social Council (see E/2003/L.20), the details of the implementation plan to strengthen the effectiveness of the United Nations presence in developing countries will be discussed in 2004 as part of the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development.

Simplification and harmonization of programming tools

40. The principal objectives of the ongoing simplification and harmonization exercise are to streamline complex rules and reduce transaction costs for programme countries, increase the effectiveness of development assistance and improve accountability. The United Nations Development Group Executive Committee (composed of representatives of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund, the World Food Programme and the United Nations Population Fund) is working to introduce the new programming tools listed below for five country programmes in 2003, with the aim of expanding their use to more than 80 country programmes by 2006.

(a) In the area of programme planning, a new United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) results matrix lays out the linkages between national priorities, overall United Nations contributions and the contributions of each agency in a single document. A new country programme action plan and an annual work plan replace the diverse United Nations agency country management

documents. A common format is being introduced by the funds and programmes to plan, request funds and review progress;

(b) In the area of programme implementation, programme effectiveness is enhanced when agencies, funds and programmes collaborate at the country level. Programme reviews revealed some form of joint programming in over 100 countries. To promote and facilitate opportunities for joint programming, revised guidelines have been developed and are currently being tested for introduction to all offices in 2004;

(c) Streamlined tools for evaluation and reporting have also been developed. A joint evaluation plan will use the goals and common outcomes of the UNDAF and the results matrix as bases for measuring the work of the funds and programmes. Additionally, a standard format for reporting on achievements has been developed and will replace the multiple reporting arrangements that currently exist;

(d) To facilitate shared resource management and transfer of funds on the basis of a common assessment of the financial systems of national partners, funds and programmes working with the same national partners would use the same modality for transferring resources. This will reduce transaction costs for national partners. In addition a mechanism has been developed to allow donors to provide funding through a single agency, with the country team then determining how the funds will be allocated among agencies. Finally, a pooling mechanism is being developed to allow one agency to disburse funds on behalf of other agencies when they are supporting the same national partner to achieve the same result.

Post-conflict transition countries

41. To improve the coherence and integration of the United Nations response in post-conflict transition, the joint Working Group on Transition Issues was formed in November 2002.[2] The Working Group reviewed the Organization's experience in eight transition situations and identified the following lessons learned and recommendations for future operations:

(a) Each transition is unique, requiring thorough and situation-specific understanding and assessment. The United Nations system needs to find ways to synthesize experiences and ensure that lessons are learned;

(b) The early designation of a humanitarian or resident coordinator as deputy special representative of the Secretary-General in each situation has proved to facilitate links among the political, peacekeeping and operational wings and address the variance in mandates for different United Nations offices at a given location;

(c) Given the fluidity of transition contexts, humanitarian action often needs to continue within a process that anticipates a seamless scaling down of humanitarian assistance and a concurrent scaling up of reconstruction efforts. This process requires joint action between humanitarian and development actors through a single, integrated strategy aimed at addressing the underlying causes of a crisis situation. Transition planning should include contingency planning and be underpinned by needs assessments that identify priorities and results and are regularly updated and undertaken jointly with all stakeholders;

(d) National ownership of transition processes should be actively promoted. This requires particular efforts in capacity-building, advocacy and negotiation. The

collective United Nations response should be linked, where possible, to national development plans and budgets. Measures may be needed to secure the flow of external resources for the payment of salaries and the resumption of basic services;

(e) The United Nations country team should develop a single strategic plan for mobilizing resources that includes recourse to the various instruments available, such as consolidated appeal processes, dedicated donor conferences and agency-specific mechanisms. This will help to limit the funding gaps often encountered in transition situations, which is particularly important given the need to finance quick-impact programme assistance. The Working Group is planning a forum in early 2004 to further highlight issues relating to funding transition situations.

Knowledge management and non-resident agencies (agencies not represented in the field)

42. The United Nations Development Group is exploring ways to harness more effectively the existing knowledge within the United Nations system through communities of practice and knowledge networks. This could be achieved through the following measures:

(a) Establishing knowledge networks or building on existing ones, such as the Millennium Development Goal Network. These communities of practice could operate at both the global and the country level;

(b) Developing an information technology platform to ensure that the expertise of non-resident agencies and regional entities is available to United Nations country teams;

(c) Strengthening the capacity at the country level to manage knowledge;

(d) Developing clear criteria for quality products and processes, as well as incentives to reward knowledge-sharing;

(e) Providing support to Governments to turn data into policy — for example, in monitoring and reviewing national plans and strategies, including the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, through the development of national statistical databases to monitor progress towards the Millennium Development Goals.

Additional resources will be required to ensure that a concrete plan can be implemented in a few pilot countries.

Strengthening the resident coordinator system

43. During the 2003 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council, Member States reiterated the need for greater participation of the specialized and technical agencies in the functioning of the resident coordinator system. The Council encouraged all organizations of the United Nations to collaborate in finding innovative ways to tap into the wealth of expertise available globally to support national efforts to achieve internationally agreed development goals (see E/2003/L.20, para. 30).

44. Discussions are under way in the United Nations Development Group to continue work in the following areas:

(a) Dedicating staff to serve agencies not represented in the field. This should be supported by knowledge management systems to enable access for country teams to the expertise and information of the relevant agencies;

(b) Making available to resident coordinators a minimum core staff capacity in the areas of strategic planning, aid coordination and information management. This support should be flexible enough to be scaled up or down depending on country needs and levels of complexity;

(c) Providing a greater level of authority to the resident or humanitarian coordinator in order to strengthen strategic planning and prioritization at the country level. This is particularly important in post-conflict transition countries;

(d) Supplementing core financing provided by the United Nations Development Programme, the funder and manager of the resident coordinator system, with additional financing, which could be obtained through shared funding of coordination activities by all participating agencies. Other options are the establishment of a trust fund financed by donors, earmarked for supporting country-level coordination, or contributions from the regular budget of the United Nations.

VIII. Clarifying roles and responsibilities in technical cooperation

45. A review of technical cooperation activities in a number of areas of the United Nations Secretariat and in funds and programmes was undertaken and is being transmitted to the General Assembly in a separate report on the review of technical cooperation in the United Nations (A/58/382), pursuant to General Assembly resolution 57/300, paragraph 22. A key objective of the review is to provide information on a representative selection of issues on which the United Nations undertakes technical cooperation with a view to assisting the countries in which programmes operate in their decision-making with regard to technical cooperation and assisting donors in adjusting their funding decisions where required.

IX. Strengthening the management capacity of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs

46. The 2004/05 budget proposal reflects a number of measures aimed at strengthening the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in particular its management capacity, consistent with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 57/300, paragraph 24. Specifically, the budget proposal outlines a realignment of the entire Department in accordance with the new mandates arising out of the Millennium Declaration and the subsequent global conferences in Monterrey and Johannesburg. An important feature is the configuration of three central offices reporting directly to the Under-Secretary-General:

(a) The Development Policy and Planning Office, whose work will include strategic planning and building policy coherence within the Department and throughout all of the Secretariat's economic and social sectors;

(b) The Financing for Development Office, which will provide a dedicated capacity for the follow-up and implementation of the Monterrey Consensus;

(c) An Office for Economic and Social Council Support and Coordination, which will assist with central policy coordination and support intergovernmental and inter-agency processes.

47. The substantive divisions of the Department will be reorganized into two clusters, each reporting to an Assistant Secretary-General, if agreed, one focusing on data analysis and information and the other on support for intergovernmental processes in the various policy areas, as well as on support for related operational responsibilities. The additional Assistant Secretary-General position proposed in the Secretary-General's report on the strengthening of the United Nations will be responsible for the responsibilities relating to data analysis and information. The Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women will not be affected by these changes.

X. Office of the Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Africa

48. The Office of the Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Africa has been established. The Secretary-General's bulletin issued on 23 April 2003 (ST/SGB/2003/6) provides a detailed description of the responsibilities and functions of the Office. Resources for the Office will be provided from the funds previously allocated to the Office of the Special Coordinator for Africa and the Least Developed Countries and those from the Office of the Adviser for Special Assignments in Africa, pursuant to paragraph 26 of General Assembly resolution 57/300. The Office is responsible for coordinating and guiding the preparation of Africa-related reports and United Nations system support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development, as well as coordinating global advocacy in support of the New Partnership.

XI. Promoting partnerships

49. Paragraphs 27 and 28 of General Assembly resolution 57/300 highlighted two principal areas for further work in strengthening interaction between civil society and the United Nations system: the establishment of a panel of eminent persons to review the relationship between the United Nations and civil society and the creation of a partnership office as part of the effort to enhance cooperation with the private sector.

Engaging civil society

50. The Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations Relations with Civil Society was established in February 2003, under the Chairmanship of Fernando Henrique Cardoso, former President of Brazil, to formulate recommendations to the Secretary-General on how to enhance interaction between the Organization and civil society. The 12 members of the Panel, individuals serving in their personal capacity, bring a wealth of relevant experience in government, parliaments and non-governmental organizations.

51. The Panel's task is to review existing guidelines, decisions and practices regarding civil society organizations' access to and participation in United Nations

deliberations and processes; to identify best practices in the United Nations system and in other international organizations; to examine how the participation of civil society actors from developing countries can be facilitated; and to review how the Secretariat is organized to facilitate, manage and evaluate the United Nations relationship with civil society and to share experiences in this regard. The Panel is to submit practical recommendations to the Secretary-General by May 2004 for his consideration.

52. The Panel held its first meeting in June at United Nations Headquarters and agreed on the outlines of a work programme that emphasizes widespread consultation with stakeholders. The Panel's activities will be chronicled on the United Nations web site.

Engaging the private sector

53. Voluntary contributions have been sought for a partnership office, which will be established in the near future. This office would bring under one umbrella the two Secretariat entities dealing most directly with the private sector and foundations: the Global Compact Office and the United Nations Fund for International Partnerships. In addition to providing direction to these existing entities, the partnerships office would work with the network of private sector focal points across the United Nations system to develop common policies and the systematic sharing of best practices. As partnership approaches expand throughout the United Nations system, there will be a growing need to ensure common standards of accountability, assessment and reporting.

XII. Allocating resources to priorities

54. Changes in the programme of work proposed in the 2004/05 budget document are described in paragraph 3 above. The budget document itself has been shortened; it has one third fewer pages than that for the previous biennium. Technical detail on post and budgetary allocations has been taken out of the main document. Greater attention has also been given to making the introduction to the budget more strategic, highlighting significant changes to the proposed work programme and providing greater alignment of activities with priorities. It is hoped that these changes, along with efforts to improve the quality of the information contained in the budget document, will assist Member States in focusing on overall questions of strategy and budgetary oversight in their intergovernmental discussions.

55. In addition, the Secretary-General proposed further improvements to the planning and budgeting system, including a shorter, more strategic medium-term plan that is linked to the budget outline and a strengthened system of evaluation and monitoring. Additional detail on these proposals will be submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session, as requested in resolution 57/300. The Secretary-General also proposed a single-stage intergovernmental review of plans and budgets, details of which have been provided in a subsequent report to the General Assembly (A/57/786).

56. Regarding individual peacekeeping operations, budgets for the financial period beginning 1 July 2003 have now been prepared using a results-based format along with aggregated resource data. This initiative has led to a more compact, user-friendly budget and has facilitated strategic review by the governing bodies. Both

the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Fifth Committee have responded positively to this approach.

57. Action 24 of the Secretary-General's report on the strengthening of the United Nations contained a number of proposals for improving the management of the United Nations trust funds. Work is now under way to consolidate funds and reduce their number, harmonize relevant rules and reporting requirements as much as possible and streamline procedures for accessing moneys.

XIII. The Organization and its people

58. The latest proposals by the Secretary-General were aimed at supplementing and reinforcing the basic building blocks of the human resources strategy endorsed by the Assembly three years ago. They include measures to further encourage staff mobility, particularly in field locations; expand career opportunities for General Service staff; help staff to achieve a better balance in their professional and personal lives; and strengthen staff management throughout the Organization.

Mechanisms and incentives to encourage mobility

59. A working group has been constituted to pursue all the components of action 25 of the Secretary-General's report. A review of the contractual arrangements and benefits offered to Secretariat staff in the field has begun and will be completed by the end of 2003. A preliminary assessment has revealed differences in entitlements and benefits packages, as well as in policy application, between the Secretariat and the United Nations funds and programmes and between the various categories of personnel. Areas of divergence include treatment of non-family duty stations, rest and recuperation schemes, leave entitlements, and travel and shipment procedures. In addition, the High-level Committee on Management has established an inter-agency task force to identify ways to reduce current barriers to mobility between common system organizations and review all impediments to the employment of spouses of United Nations staff at various duty stations.

Expanding opportunities for General Service staff

60. Action 27 of the Secretary-General's report made a commitment to develop a comprehensive plan for improving career opportunities for General Service staff, who make up approximately 48 per cent of the Organization's workforce. Work has begun to develop such a plan, which will require further consultations with staff. An initial statistical analysis of staff in the General Service and related categories is soon to be completed, together with a review of policies and practices in comparable organizations, especially in the areas of induction, career planning and opportunities for mobility. This is due to be completed by the end of 2003.

61. In terms of overall functions and responsibilities, a first step has been taken with the development of generic job profiles, which have been completed for more than 40 per cent of General Service positions. This has involved updating job requirements, titles and requisite skills and competencies to meet evolving organizational needs. The availability of these profiles on the web increases transparency and assists staff in planning their careers. Expanded learning programmes for General Service staff are also being piloted. General Service staff

make up 59 per cent of total participants in staff development activities Secretariat-wide.

62. In addition, a study on ways to promote General Service staff members to Professional posts was requested in General Assembly resolution 57/300, paragraph 39, and will be submitted to the Assembly at its fifty-ninth session.

Helping staff to balance professional and private lives

63. Flexible working arrangements were introduced for all Secretariat departments as from 1 February 2003. Subject to the work requirements of each department or office, staff can now avail themselves of various options, including staggered work hours and working away from the office. The Office of Human Resources Management is monitoring the situation to ensure that these working arrangements are broadly applied.

64. In addition, the Organization is undertaking specific measures to ensure that its policy on HIV/AIDS in the workplace is fully implemented. Goals are to improve staff awareness of the issue and its implications, ensure better access to medical care and review insurance coverage. Specific measures taken in 2003 include:

(a) The development of guidelines to ensure better access to voluntary and confidential counselling and testing in field duty stations;

(b) The appointment of HIV/AIDS policy advisers in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations at Headquarters, as well as in five of its field missions;

(c) The establishment of a revolving fund for procurement of anti-retroviral drug stocks in certain country offices and the use of the Staff Benevolent Fund in other countries to supplement out-of-pocket expenses related to treatment;

(d) Ten country visits by the United Nations Medical Director and other medical staff in order to advise United Nations country teams on improving access to care and treatment.

Continuing efforts to improve management

65. In its resolution 57/300, paragraph 40, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue efforts to improve the quality of the Organization's management. A comprehensive review of delegated authority is due to be completed by the end of 2003. It will cover programmes, budgets, procurement, asset management, information and communications technology and human resource management. At the same time, proposals are being considered to simplify various administrative systems, including expanding the use of lump sums as an option for certain staff and travel benefits. It is envisaged that there will be a generic delegation framework, supplemented by individual modifications, reflecting the distinct activities at various offices and geographic locations and the volume and nature of operations. Once the new framework has been agreed, efforts to redefine the respective roles and staffing of the Department of Management and executive offices can be effectively addressed. The implementation plan will also address training requirements.

Enhanced conditions of service

66. The International Civil Service Commission's review of pay and benefits resulted in the first increase in the base salary for Professional staff in many years, effective from January 2003. Agreement has also been reached on the introduction of a new Master Standard for the classification of Professional posts. Preparatory work is under way for a pilot study on broad banding of posts and the related subject of pay for performance, as well as for the establishment of the Senior Management Service. It is hoped that additional improvements in remuneration are achieved as a result of the Commission's ongoing efforts to improve conditions of service.

67. In terms of the functioning of the Commission itself, an independent review panel has been formed and will hold its first meeting in the third quarter of 2003. The results of this review will be submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session.

68. Overall, the subject of human resource management reform will be considered by the Assembly at its fifty-ninth session, when a number of additional reports will be submitted for its consideration. The subjects covered will include an assessment of human resources reform in general, an initial review of the new recruitment, promotion and placement system, and efforts to rejuvenate the Secretariat.

XIV. Managing change

69. The Secretary-General's report on the strengthening of the United Nations also indicated that implementing the reforms would require greater attention to training and information technology. The 2004/05 budget proposes increased resources in both of these areas.

70. With respect to training, a plan has been developed to ensure that managers and staff have the necessary skills to meet the new challenges of reform. The plan focuses on providing additional training in four main areas: leadership development and performance management; substantive skills training; information technology; and human and financial resources management. It is important to note that the total funds requested for training in the 2004/05 biennium still represent less than 1 per cent of the Organization's budget, markedly less than in comparable organizations.

71. With regard to information technology, the report on the revised information and communication technology strategy (A/57/620) was welcomed by the Assembly in its resolution 57/304 of 15 April 2003. The report highlighted three areas where additional attention will be needed: sharing and disseminating the Organization's institutional knowledge, modernizing the servicing of United Nations organs and governing bodies and improving administrative and management processes. Progress in these areas is dependent on the adequate and sustained investment of resources.

Conclusions

72. **The basic rationale behind the Secretary-General's agenda for further change was to ensure that the Organization devoted its attention to the priorities established by Member States in the Millennium Declaration and in the outcomes of the recent global conferences. The argument was made for a more focused programme of work, along with the need for the Secretariat to provide better service to Member States. As indicated in the present report and others, implementation is in progress.**

73. **The nature and pace of reform implementation will also depend on progress made in a number of intergovernmental forums, the most significant being the General Assembly, which, during its fifty-eighth session, will discuss systemic improvements to the planning and budgeting system. Other areas requiring further deliberation by Member States include funding for operational activities for development, to be discussed in the Economic and Social Council, and the reform of treaty bodies, to be discussed in the Commission on Human Rights.**

74. **Finally, the Secretary-General's report on the strengthening of the United Nations stressed that a stronger United Nations also depends on commensurate changes in the intergovernmental organs, most notably the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council. Revitalizing the agendas of these bodies and improving their working methods will be an essential step towards improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the Organization.**

75. **As stated in the report of the Secretary-General, "the need for a strong multilateral institution — one dedicated to the service of humanity as a whole — has never been more acutely felt than in the current era of globalization" (A/57/387, para. 2). The events of the last year have reinforced this statement. The implementation of the reform will require the continued collective commitment of United Nations staff, managers and Member States alike.**

Notes

[1] In Athens, Bonn, Brussels, Copenhagen, Lisbon, London, Madrid, Paris and Rome.

[2] The Working Group comprises representatives of the United Nations Development Group and the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs.

United Nations A/58/352

General Assembly

Distr.: General
5 September 2003

Original: English

Fifty-eighth session
Item 40 (b) of the provisional agenda*
New Partnership for Africa's Development: progress in implementation and international support: causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa

Implementation of the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa

Report of the Secretary-General**

Summary

The present report is submitted in compliance with General Assembly resolution 57/296 and updates the information contained in the progress report of the Secretary-General submitted to the Assembly at its fifty-seventh session (A/57/172).

The report addresses specific follow-up actions and initiatives taken in the implementation of the recommendations contained in the 1998 report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa (A/52/871), identifies the problems and obstacles in the effective implementation of the recommendations and makes proposals on the future format of the follow-up of the implementation of the recommendations in the Secretary-General's report.

It is noted in the report that while progress has been made in some areas of the recommendations, that progress has been slow and uneven. Therefore, concerted action by African countries and their development partners is needed to speed up the implementation of the recommendations.

* A/58/150.

** The late submission of the present report is due to a delay in obtaining necessary comments and input from United Nations entities.

03-49331 (E) 031003

I. Introduction

1. The progress on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa (A/52/871) has been monitored and reported to the General Assembly since 2000. Following the consideration of the previous progress report (A/57/172), the General Assembly, by its resolution 57/296 of 20 December 2002, decided to include a sub-item entitled "Causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa" under a single agenda item on the development of Africa, entitled "New Partnership for Africa's Development: progress in the implementation and international support", beginning at its fifty-eighth session. The General Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to submit a comprehensive report on the sub-item to the Assembly at its fifty-eighth session. The present report is prepared in compliance with that resolution.

2. The report updates the information contained in the aforementioned progress report. It highlights specific follow-up actions undertaken and/or initiated in the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report, including the problems and constraints in the effective implementation of the various recommendations, and makes proposals for the future format of the follow-up of the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report.

3. The various inputs provided by the organizations of the United Nations system formed an important basis for preparing the present report. However, where feasible, the report also draws on the information from secondary sources regarding the actions of African Governments, regional organizations and the donor community in support of the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report.

II. Progress made in the implementation of the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General

4. Since the submission of the previous report, further progress has been made in the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report, though it has been slow and uneven. Details of the actions and initiatives taken and those planned in the implementation of the recommendations are given in an updated matrix, prepared in compliance with paragraph 10 of resolution 56/37. The highlights reported below in the selected areas of the recommendations, where concrete actions have been taken, are indicative of that progress.

A. Responding to situations of conflict

1. Peacemaking

Appointing special mediators or special commissions to look into the sources of dispute and recommend practical solutions

5. The Secretary-General has continued to appoint special envoys and representatives in the countries concerned in an effort to prevent, mediate, contain and resolve conflicts. Through the United Nations peace-building missions, the Secretary-General's special envoys and representatives have encouraged and facilitated national dialogue and unity, respect for the democratic process and human rights. In June and December 2002, the peace-building mission in the Central African Republic organized meetings of political parties and parliamentarians aimed at encouraging national dialogue for promoting reconciliation and building confidence among the warring parties; the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Angola facilitated the completion in 2002 of the peace process in Angola. The recent appointment of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to Liberia is yet another example of the Organization's efforts to mediate, contain and resolve conflicts in the region.

6. The African Union has also appointed special envoys to follow on peace talks and to recommend practical steps for conflict resolution in the countries concerned. Alarmed by the number of conflicts ravaging their continent, African leaders met in February 2003 at the first extraordinary summit of heads of State of the African Union to reinvigorate their efforts to end conflicts in the region. The current plans for creating the Peace and Security Council in the African Union, modelled on the United Nations Security Council, reaffirm the resolve of African countries in the search for durable solutions to the various conflicts on the continent. Once created and operational, the Council, under the authority of the African Union, will have the power to mediate conflicts and could institute sanctions against its member States in cases of unconstitutional change of Government and gross violation of human rights, such as genocide.

7. In addition to political will and resolve, the existence of adequate African capacity for conflict resolution is critical for achieving a durable solution to the myriad conflicts besieging the continent. It is important that the international community support and nurture African initiatives for peace and security. In this regard, the dynamic partnership emerging between the African Union and the European Union in promoting peace and stability in Africa is encouraging. The possibility of the European Union-supported fund for peacekeeping operations, conducted under the authority of the African Union, could enhance the latter's capacity effectively to play its role in the peace, security and stability of Africa. The United Nations will continue to support African efforts towards peace, security and stability in the region.

Stopping the proliferation of arms, reducing expenditure on arms and attaining a zero-growth budget for military expenditure

8. In an effort to encourage African States to contribute information to the Secretary-General's report on the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, the Department for Disarmament Affairs of the Secretariat convened in 2002 two

workshops for the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Southern African Development Community States (SADC). As a result, 17 African countries participated in the 2002 Register. The Department is planning similar workshops in the latter part of 2003 for the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the Inter-governmental Authority on Development (IGAD).

9. Following its workshop entitled "Proliferation of small arms and light weapons and mercenary activities: threat to peace and security in West Africa", held in March 2003, the Security Council adopted its resolution 1467 (2003), which contains a declaration on the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and mercenary activities in West Africa. By that declaration, the Council recommended that the West African States consider broadening the small arms moratorium of ECOWAS to include information exchange mechanisms for all types of arms procured by the States members of ECOWAS as well as for arms transfers by supplier countries. It also recommended the creation of an ECOWAS national register that would record national holdings of those weapons.

10. In June 2003, the Department for Disarmament Affairs, through its Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, launched a capacity-building programme for the armed and security forces on the control of small arms and light weapons in Central Africa. The objective of the programme is to provide officers with modern techniques, skills and tools which would enable them to address the issues of proliferation of small arms and light weapons more efficiently. The programme was launched following the Department seminar in May 2003 at which the States members of ECCAS adopted the Programme of Priority Activities for the Implementation in their subregion of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

11. Overall, progress in this area to date has been slow. The issue of stopping the proliferation of arms depends very much on Member States and their willingness and capacity to implement sovereign and international legally based responsibilities. For its part, the United Nations will continue to play its advocacy role in stopping the flow of illicit weapons.

12. **African countries are further encouraged to be more transparent in providing information on arms and ammunition and to participate in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. It is also proposed that the international community recognize the efforts of the African countries that are stopping or controlling the proliferation of illegal weapons and provide them with additional support.**

2. Peacekeeping

13. The United Nations currently operates five peacekeeping missions in Africa, namely the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE), the United Nations Mission in Côte d'Ivoire and the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara. UNAMSIL is the largest mission, followed by MONUC. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations of the Secretariat is conducting assessments

of peacekeeping missions in Africa with a view to extracting lessons learned for future operations.

14. The United Nations remains committed to providing support for the implementation of ceasefire agreements and facilitating an environment conducive to the promotion of national reconciliation. Following the signing of a ceasefire agreement in December 2002 between the Transitional Government of Burundi and the rebel forces, in January 2003 the Secretary-General, in response to a request from the facilitator of the peace agreement, dispatched a four-person team to Pretoria to assist the joint South African/African Union technical team to develop a concept of operation for the African mission. The assistance provided by the United Nations to the joint technical team proved helpful in the team's planning process. However, the recent resumption of hostilities and deadly attacks on civilians and the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Burundi are signs that the country is sliding back into war.

Roles for United Nations peacekeeping in Africa

15. In line with the recommendation in the Secretary-General's report that the international community provide support for the implementation of comprehensive settlements, including a wide range of civilian elements, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations is working with regional organizations to support their efforts and in the establishment of peacekeeping missions, including military, civilian police and other components. UNAMSIL and UNMEE incorporated a range of civilian elements in their support of comprehensive settlements. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has strongly argued for the need for comprehensive settlements and, in this regard, its Executive Committee specifically called upon the Office and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to enhance collaboration on all aspects of the civilian and humanitarian character of asylum. Institutionally, a Department liaison officer has been seconded to the Office to ensure that more effective response and cooperation in complex humanitarian emergencies can be realized and multidisciplinary assessment teams within crisis situations can be set up.

16. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has been advocating for the inclusion of human rights dimensions in all United Nations peacekeeping efforts at the beginning of the process to ensure these issues are mainstreamed and that peacekeepers undergo training in human rights. For example, in Burundi, the Office has been able to secure agreement to train the African peacekeepers to be deployed to the country. The Office participated in the training of peacekeepers in Côte d'Ivoire. Discussions are in progress with ECOWAS to develop a joint training programme for its peacekeepers before deployment to any country. In close collaboration with the World Bank and through the Cities Alliance, UN-Habitat is assisting post-conflict countries, including Mozambique and Ethiopia, with resettlement programmes.

Supporting African initiatives to resolve disputes

17. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is assisting in the capacity-building of the regional and subregional organizations in conflict resolution. In this regard, it is supporting the Conflict Management Centre of the African Union in capacity-building for analysis, policy and institutional

development, including the operationalization process of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union. In May 2003 UNDP signed with the Union a $6.4 million project to support the implementation of the Peace and Security Agenda of the Union. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, among other United Nations system organizations, has also been actively supporting the regional and subregional initiatives, including the preparation of a draft humanitarian protocol for inclusion in the IGAD-initiated peace talks for the Sudan.

18. The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) helped to establish a Women's Resource Centre for women delegates attending the IGAD-sponsored Somali peace process. The Centre in Somalia is used for consultations on women-specific proposals within the larger programme of the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration committee. In collaboration with MONUC and the Office of the Facilitator of the Intercongolese Dialogue and in the framework of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), UNIFEM has supported the participation of Congolese peace talks by training women experts and providing them with substantive documents and has facilitated their travel to participate in the Dialogue. Women participants in the peace process strongly advocated for the inclusion of women's rights and gender perspectives in the transitional Constitution of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

19. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has been working with African regional economic communities towards mainstreaming human rights and humanitarian law in their peace-building and peacekeeping initiatives. For example, the Yaounde Centre for Democracy and Human Rights, in collaboration with ECCAS and the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa are involved in projects aimed at fostering conflict prevention and resolution of disputes. However, the capacity of the regional organizations to take over the Centre's initiative is week. **Continued dialogue with the regional economic communities needs to be encouraged**.

Protecting civilians in situations of conflict

20. The United Nations peacekeeping operations also involve a wide range of civilian elements, including the protection of civilians in situations of conflict. UNAMSIL has a human rights section with a monitoring and reporting team. Similarly, the United Nations country team in Liberia, through the deployment of human rights officers, reports and monitors all forms of abuses in camps hosting internally displaced persons. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the African Commission on Human and People's Rights at a joint seminar in April 2003 adopted a memorandum of understanding, aimed at further strengthening the monitoring of the implementation of the 1969 refugee convention of the then Organization of African Unity.

21. In line with the recommendations of the Secretary-General's report on the necessity to pay special attention to the needs of children in armed conflict, the Security Council in March 2003 adopted the aide-memoire on the protection of civilians, including children, from the effects of armed conflict. The aide-memoire supports the establishment of zones of peace to secure access for immunization to war-affected children. It further supports temporary ceasefires and "days of tranquillity" and specific provisions for the protection of children, including, where appropriate, the integration of child protection advisers in peace operations. In

several countries at war, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has successfully negotiated "days of tranquility", during which warring parties have suspended hostilities to allow UNICEF and its partners safe access to immunize children. National Immunization Days and other innovative approaches have proved to be a catalyst in bringing together humanitarian, political and military actors to provide services for children.

Addressing refugees security issues

22. The Secretary-General, in his 1998 report on the causes of conflict in Africa, underscored the need to ensure that all refugees and internally displaced persons are adequately protected. For example, the Implementation Group for the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, of the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat, is working on an annotated road map for the protection of refugees and internally displaced persons. The road map, which will be finalized by the end of 2003, supports the development of clear criteria and procedures for the identification and separation of armed elements in situations of massive population displacement. During 2002, the Government of Zambia and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees continued to relocate Angolan refugees with military background to areas away from civilian refugees. During 2002, the International Organization for Migration also relocated refugees in Kenya and Mozambique to new camps with better security and facilities and internally displaced persons in Sierra Leone to secure areas in that country.

23. In its efforts to enhance physical protection and security for refugees, the Office formulated in 2002 the Agenda for Protection, which would serve as an overall framework for revitalizing the existing international protection regime to address refugee security issues. The Agenda calls for enhanced partnerships through increased resources. The "Convention Plus" is one such new tool intended to develop, together with the international community, special agreements to promote fair burdens and responsibility-sharing and achieve durable solutions, and to reduce secondary movements of refugees. The Office, in partnership with the Government of Canada, provided training to police officers in Guinea, aimed at enhancing the security of refugees in several camps throughout the country.

24. The presence of large numbers of long-term refugees can have a severe social and environmental impact on host countries. Various United Nations system organizations are assisting such countries in mitigating these adverse effects. The World Food Programme (WFP), through its Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation, not only provides food to refugees, but also assists in the rehabilitation of degraded surroundings of the camp environment through food-for-work programmes for reforestation and land resource conservation. Food aid support to supplementary and therapeutic health units used by both refugees and refugee-hosting communities and the provision of food processing tools for the use of both the refugees and host communities are some of the ways WFP is assisting in mitigating the social and environmental impacts of large numbers of refugees on refugee-hosting countries. In the spirit of burden sharing, bilateral and multilateral donors are encouraged to provide increased assistance towards mitigating the adverse social, economic and environmental effects on the African countries hosting such large numbers of refugees.

3. Post-conflict peace-building

Relating emergency assistance to reconstruction and development

25. The challenges of post-conflict development are complex and multifaceted, including, among other things, recovery, rehabilitation, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants into civilian life, sustainable livelihood and demining. The Secretary-General's report recommended that relief efforts must be a step towards development for the consolidation of peace in the aftermath of conflict. The United Nations Development Group/Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs Joint Working Group on Transition Issues follows up the issue of the continuum from relief to development and routinely addresses it as part of the Secretary-General's report to the Economic and Social Council at its humanitarian segment and the General Assembly. It seeks to promote a coordinated and coherent approach among various actors working in the countries in transition from conflict to peace. It also formulates guidance for United Nations country teams working in transition contexts to improve response, including reintegration of refugees and internally displaced persons, and to enhance resource mobilization for post-conflict development.

26. As part of its strategy for facilitating the transition to sustainable peace in African countries emerging from conflict, the World Bank in 2003 implemented a $454 million Multi-sector Rehabilitation Programme in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, aiming to improve agricultural production and enhance food security, restore critical infrastructure and essential social services and strengthen the capacity of Government to formulate and implement its development programmes. The World Bank, together with UNDP, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, UNICEF and other multilateral and bilateral partners, launched a $500 million Multi-country Demobilization and Reintegration Programme for the greater Great Lakes region with two national programmes in Rwanda and Angola, as well as special projects in Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

27. The World Bank's portfolio in conflict-affected countries in Africa stood at approximately $5.5 billion by June 2003. The Bank's Post-Conflict Fund has also provided grants to 14 African countries in the areas of pilot reconstruction activities, reintegration of ex-combatants and displaced populations and community reconciliation processes. These activities have been carried out in partnerships with the United Nations and civil society groups.

28. The Ad Hoc Advisory Group on African Countries Emerging from Conflict of the Economic and Social Council, created in response to Council resolution 2002/1, is yet another United Nations initiative that integrates relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction and development into a comprehensive approach for peace and stability. In its effort to mobilize support for Guinea-Bissau, the first country considered under the initiative, the Advisory Group undertook in October 2002 a mission to Guinea-Bissau to consult with all stakeholders regarding the challenges facing the country and the ways in which the bilateral donors and others could assist. Its report (E/2003/8), submitted to the Council at its organizational session in January 2003, underscored the need for greater coordination by the international community for broad-based recovery and reconstruction so as to prevent the re-emergence of conflict in Guinea-Bissau. The work of the Group on Guinea-Bissau is ongoing.

Providing peace-friendly structural adjustment programmes

29. The Secretary-General's report underscores the importance of relaxing strict conditionality imposed by international lending institutions on the countries experiencing a delicate political transition. In this regard, the Secretary-General continues to engage in constructive dialogue with the Bretton Woods institutions. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) is using the staff-monitored programme as a framework for the resumption of its support to Guinea-Bissau to allow the Government to continue with its structural adjustment and economic reforms at a slower pace than under the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF), which was suspended, as the country did not meet the required conditions. Since the suspension of the IMF programme of support under PRGF, UNDP has developed an Emergency Economic Management Fund for Guinea-Bissau as a mechanism for bilateral partners to channel resources to support the critical State-provided services.

B. Building durable peace and encouraging sustainable development

1. Promoting good governance

Securing respect for human rights and the rule of law

30. Most African countries have ratified all the international instruments for the protection of human rights, which is an encouraging development. Progress in the implementation of such instruments and adherence to the rule of law, however, is slow and violations of human rights are not uncommon in many African countries.

31. Various United Nations system organizations are assisting African countries in capacity-building on human rights issues at the national and regional levels. For example, the High Commissioner for Human Rights has continued to advocate for the ratification of treaties by African countries, including by developing closer relations with the African Union and the African Commission on Human and People's Rights and being fully engaged in African initiatives such as the Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). Through its regional office in Addis Ababa, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights is providing support to the African Union to facilitate the mainstreaming of human rights in all its activities and programmes in the area of peace and security. In May 2003 the Office supported the organization of the second African Ministerial Conference on Human Rights in Rwanda. A programme of technical assistance to the African Commission on Human and People's Rights and the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child is also being planned.

32. UNDP, the World Bank and the French Government are supporting a national review of the justice sector in Chad with a view to reforming and strengthening its judicial institutions. The outcome of the review will form the basis for a national action plan to reform judicial institutions and promote human rights and the rule of law.

33. UNDP, in collaboration with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, is also supporting a project for strengthening regional capacity for the promotion and protection of human rights, democracy and the rule of law and good governance in southern Africa. Through its global projects,

the Office is supporting the establishment and strengthening of national human rights institutions and truth and reconciliation processes. For example, it is providing technical assistance, including expertise in fund-raising and management, to the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which has the mandate to respond, among other things, to the needs of victims and prevent a repetition of human rights violations suffered during the Sierra Leone conflict. UNIFEM is also assisting in building the capacity of the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission for witness protection in cases of gender-specific human rights violations during the decade-long civil war in Sierra Leone.

Enhancing administrative capacity

34. Various United Nations system organizations, including the Bretton Woods institutions, are assisting African countries in strengthening their administrative capacity for formulating and adopting a comprehensive national strategy for good governance in the area of public sector reform, including the financial sector, as well as measures aimed at enhancing transparency and accountability. IMF has also set up African Regional Technical Assistance Centres to help build technical capacity for economic and financial management. These are currently operational in Dar es Salaam, serving six countries in East Africa, and in Mali, to serve 10 francophone countries in West Africa.

35. In response to "good governance" as one of the critical preconditions for the implementation of the goals and objectives of NEPAD, the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) has been established, voluntarily acceded to by African countries for self-monitoring and peer learning. As of May 2003, 15 African countries had acceded to APRM, which has the objective of promoting the adoption of policies, standards and practices that lead to political stability and sustainable growth and development in the region. This is an encouraging development, in that African countries themselves have imposed good political and economic governance as a critical precondition for achieving political stability and sustained economic growth in Africa.

2. Sustainable development

Creating a positive environment for investment and economic growth

36. African countries have, over the years, undertaken economic and political reforms, including policies and measures aimed at facilitating private sector development and investment promotion. The private sector in most African countries at present comprises small and microenterprises. However, they provide an important opportunity for employment and income creation in urban and rural areas. Investment in such enterprises needs to be emphasized to improve their productivity and growth. In this regard, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), through its enterprise development programme, continues to support small and microenterprises in a number of African countries. The programme provides training to entrepreneurs aimed at creating new employment opportunities through increased investment, efficient production technology, improved management and marketing techniques and exploration of new market outlets for small and microenterprise products.

37. In order to speed up restructuring and reform processes in Africa, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) introduced a subregional approach to the work of the Conference of African Ministers of Industry on the formulation of a subregional programme to introduce a value-chain approach to industrialization in Africa and, in this context, the first subregional meeting took place in October 2002 with the objective of translating the NEPAD objectives into achieving sustainable economic and industrial growth. Furthermore, UNIDO-supported integrated programmes for enterprise development were implemented in 14 African countries in 2002, for a total of about $90 million, including support for investment and technology promotion as well as small and microenterprise development. In March 2003 UNIDO initiated a post-conflict small and microenterprise support programme for industrial development and poverty alleviation in Sierra Leone.

Emphasizing social development

38. The Secretary-General's report underscores the need for focusing budgetary allocation decisions on basic human needs and poverty reduction. In their efforts to address poverty reduction, many African countries are using the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) as instruments for designing poverty reduction interventions. As of July 2003, 19 African countries had completed full PRSPs and a further 10 interim PRSPs, which are a step in the preparation of their full PRSPs. The World Bank, UNDP and other United Nations system organizations are assisting the African countries in formulating such PRSPs in line with their national priorities. The World Bank's project portfolios in post-conflict African countries include social protection and social development projects, for which its support in 2002 amounted to $400 million.

39. The World Summit for Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 2002, re-emphasized an integrated approach for sustainable development, including social development, economic development and environmental protection. The Summit deliberations paid much attention to Africa's problems in the context of sustainable development. The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, adopted at the Summit, underscores the need to take an integrated approach to sustainable development through the formulation of national sustainable development strategies, which could be built on the PRSPs. Only three African countries have to date implemented integrated national sustainable development strategies, while work is in progress in another six countries. The World Bank, UNDP, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat and other United Nations system organizations are assisting African countries in identifying their priorities for implementing sustainable development either through PRSPs or national sustainable development strategies, as appropriate. The United Nations Environment Programme has also assisted African countries with a systematic process to identify poverty-environment linkages and to address them in their PRSPs.

40. The International Atomic Energy Agency's technical assistance programme in African countries, amounting to about $34.8 million for the biennium 2003-2004 (accounting for 25.3 per cent of the Agency's total technical cooperation fund), is targeted at poverty reduction by supporting projects that focus on health care, food and agriculture, combating diseases in livestock and crops and management of natural resources in the context of sustainable development. The International Labour Organization, through its Jobs in Africa programme, covering 17 African

countries, has helped formulate national employment and poverty reduction policies, mainstream employment concerns in national policies, support pilot projects and build capacity of the social partners.

41. Water and sanitation are critical in poverty eradication and, in this regard, the Africa-European Union partnership on water and sanitation was signed at the World Summit in Johannesburg in 2002. The implementation of projects under the proposed European Water Fund for Africa could make a positive contribution to the efforts of African countries in poverty reduction. The Economic Partnership Agreements concluded between the European Union and the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) group of countries, on which negotiations started in September 2002, is yet another promising initiative aiming to promote sustainable development and poverty reduction in the ACP group of countries.

42. The challenges of poverty reduction in Africa, especially in conflict and post-conflict countries, are enormous. While economic and political reforms, including good governance, sound social and economic policies, domestic resource mobilization and allocation are important for poverty reduction, they are not sufficient for advancing sustained economic growth, which is an important prerequisite for poverty reduction.

43. **Increased and sustained aid to African countries well above the existing levels, accompanied by appropriate policies conducive to growth, including the necessity for enhancing institutional capacities, would be needed to enable African countries to accelerate their current efforts at poverty reduction to achieve the Millennium Development Goals of halving poverty by 2015.**

Investing in human resources

44. Human resources constitute an important factor in development. The already limited human resource capacity in African countries is being further eroded through the HIV/AIDS pandemic ravaging many African countries, political instability, persistent conflicts and the brain drain. Concerned about the declining human resource capacity in the region and the need for concerted action, the African Union, at its Summit in Durban, South Africa, in 2002, declared 2002-2011 the "Decade for capacity-building in Africa".

45. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is assisting African countries in the preparation and implementation of the Education for All national action plans, broadening Education for All to include secondary, technical and vocational and higher education and introduction of information and communication technology to expand access to education. Furthermore, UNESCO, in partnership with the United Nations Children's Fund and WFP, is also reviewing the modalities for developing programmes, including those in post-conflict countries, to support the objectives of NEPAD. In this regard, a joint NEPAD-UNESCO seminar, entitled "UNESCO and NEPAD: From vision to action", was held in March 2003 in Ouagadougou, and the Ouagadougou Declaration and Action Plan were adopted by representatives of subregional organizations. The Action Plan is intended to create a forum of African regional and subregional organizations to support cooperation between NEPAD and UNESCO in order to achieve NEPAD objectives.

46. The World Bank's sector-wide programmes in the education and health sectors, served by different lending programmes, are also contributing to human resources development in Africa. In 2003 the World Bank approved investment loans for the education sector reform project ($42.3 million) to help Chad develop the appropriate policy framework and strategies for quality basic education; the rehabilitation of basic education in Sierra Leone ($20 million) for the immediate rehabilitation of schools in the post-conflict situation; and a higher education project ($42.5 million) for Mozambique, with the objective of enhancing internal efficiency and expanding the output of graduates, improving equitable access and improving the quality of education and relevance of the curriculum.

47. The increasing prominence of PRSPs and the introduction of the Fast-Track Initiative are means of accelerating support for education, though primary education seems to have a prominent place in the PRSPs. Debt relief under the HIPC initiative may also provide additional support for basic education. It is estimated that $5.6 billion in aid would be needed annually for providing universal primary education in Africa. However, the challenge for human resources development goes beyond primary education to include also secondary, post-secondary and technical and vocational education.

48. **African countries need to make substantial investment in their education, health and related social services to address these challenges, including achieving the Millennium Development Goals relating to universal primary education and eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2015. In this regard, the international community is encouraged to step up its support to boost African efforts.**

Public health priorities

49. Combating the scourge of HIV/AIDS is the major public health priority in Africa. Since the adoption of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS at the special session of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS in June 2001, African countries have put in place strategies to fight the pandemic. By mid-2002, 40 countries in Africa had developed national strategies to fight HIV/AIDS (almost three times as many as in 2000) and 19 countries now have National AIDS Councils (a six-fold increase since 2000). The Declaration on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, Malaria and other related infectious diseases, adopted at the African Union Summit of Heads of State and Government, held in Maputo in July 2003, reaffirmed and reiterated the commitment and resolve of African leaders to intensify and consolidate their efforts in the implementation of the Abuja Declaration (2000) and the Plan of Action on Roll Back Malaria; and the Abuja Declaration (2001) and the Framework Plan of Action on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and other related infectious diseases.

50. Various United Nations system organizations are assisting African countries in HIV/AIDS awareness programmes. For example, in Sierra Leone, UNIFEM works with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, the United Nations Population Fund and UNAMSIL as a resource on gender and human rights in the context of HIV/AIDS. A new media centre has been established in Sierra Leone for the HIV/AIDS awareness programme and a gender and HIV/AIDS training course has been developed for the national Media Commission.

51. The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, established in January 2002, is now operational, though grossly underfunded. Pledges to the Fund as at June 2003 stood at $4.7 billion, compared to the estimated global requirements of about $10.5 billion annually for effective prevention, treatment, care and support programmes. The need for increased contributions by developed countries to the Global Fund has been echoed at various forums, including at the AIDS conference, held in Paris in July 2003.

52. Other funding programmes include the Multi-country HIV/AIDS Programme for Africa (MAP), initiated in 2001, which provides support for HIV/AIDS prevention, care and treatment programmes. In 2003, the World Bank approved $55 million for an HIV/AIDS Response Project for Mozambique and $35 million for the Multi-sectoral HIV/AIDS project in Rwanda, with the objective of strengthening preventive measures to slow the spread of AIDS and expanding support and care for those infected or affected by the pandemic. Approximately $400 million per year in concessional lending, with a corresponding grant value of $275-300 million per year, is projected through 2005 under MAP.

53. Another welcome development in combating HIV/AIDS is the recent commitment of the United States Government of $15 billion to fight HIV/AIDS in 12 sub-Saharan African and two Caribbean countries. The initiative, when approved for funding by the United States Congress and delivery mechanisms are set up, could have a significant impact on combating HIV/AIDS in Africa.

54. Notwithstanding the efforts of major pharmaceutical companies to cut prices sharply on their brand-name antiviral medicines for AIDS victims in poor African countries, the prices are still higher than similar generic drugs produced in India, Brazil and Thailand. **The United Nations welcomes the recent World Trade Organization agreement to allow countries with insufficient pharmaceutical manufacturing capacity to import cheap generic drugs from other countries with such a capacity. In view of the death and devastation being caused by AIDS and other diseases, the international community must ensure that the agreed system is flexibly implemented, so that developing countries, including African countries, can gain access to affordable medicines for all.**

Eliminating all forms of discrimination against women

55. The United Nations continues to encourage African countries to ratify or accede to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. As of May 2003, 49 African countries have ratified the Convention. Since the adoption of the Optional Protocol to the Convention by the General Assembly in 1999, only three African countries have ratified it. Through its technical cooperation activities, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs is assisting Member States to enhance their capacity to report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and to implement the Convention. Since 1998, nine African countries have participated in such technical cooperation activities.

56. In March 2003, the African Union convened meetings of experts and ministers to consider and finalize the draft Additional Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa. The Protocol was adopted at the African Union Summit, held in Mozambique in July 2003. The endorsement by the Union of the election of five African women to its eight-member Commission is indeed a major step forward for Africa in the direction of

women's parity and equality in the political decision-making process. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees supported the process for the elaboration of the recently adopted African Union protocol on the rights of African women. All the programmes supported by the Office at the national and regional levels have a gender dimension and the Office, in collaboration with UNIFEM and other agencies, assists African countries in formulating and adopting policies and programmes for the elimination of discrimination against women in their respective countries.

Restructuring international aid

57. Official development assistance (ODA) to Africa over the last two years has shown some improvement, after a decline in the latter part of the 1990s, from $16.4 billion in 2000 to $17.7 billion in 2001 and to about $18.6 billion in 2002. The urgency for increased development assistance for poor countries, particularly those in Africa, echoed at the recent international conferences, including, among others, the Millennium Summit (2000), the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (2001) and the International Conference on Financing for Development (2002), has, in no small way, rekindled the renewed commitment of donors to assist poor countries in tackling some of the critical development challenges facing them.

58. The G-8 countries have also expressed their commitment to increase resources to Africa by supporting the implementation of NEPAD. At their Summit in Kananaskis, Canada, in June 2002, the G-8 countries committed themselves to the African Plan of Action and to devote $6 billion per year of the estimated increase in global ODA of $12 billion by 2006 to African countries that adhere to the rule of law, invest in human resources and pursue policies that stimulate economic growth and contribute to poverty reduction. These commitments were reaffirmed at the G-8 Summit, held in Evian, France, in June 2003.

59. The Millennium Challenge Account, announced by President Bush at the International Conference on Financing for Development, held in Monterrey, Mexico, in March 2002, is a pledge to channel $10 billion over the next three years to poor countries, including those in Africa. It is a programme in which the United States would increase its development aid by 50 per cent over the next three years, resulting in an annual increase of $5 billion by 2006. The grants under the Millennium Challenge Account would reward countries that adhere to the rule of law, respect human rights, invest in education and better health care and pursue policies for more open markets and sustainable budget policies.

60. These initiatives notwithstanding, the progress in meeting the United Nations target of 0.7 per cent of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development/Development Assistance Committee countries' gross national product to ODA remains slow. Only five countries have so far met or exceeded this target. However, there have been encouraging developments in the area of aid effectiveness. Some donor countries have taken steps to untie aid, thereby providing the flexibility to recipient countries to use assistance in a flexible manner to maximize its effectiveness. Such untied aid covers the balance of payments, debt forgiveness, sector assistance, commodity support and assistance to non-governmental organizations. However, foreign technical assistance, which currently

takes up approximately 25 per cent of ODA, remains tied, which is a major source of concern for recipient countries.

61. While African countries have benefited from recent efforts in ODA increases, in view of the enormity of the challenges facing African countries, particularly those in conflict and post-conflict situations, the current levels of ODA remain inadequate for tackling the massive development challenges confronting the region. **Donor countries are urged to increase their efforts to meet the United Nations target of ODA to developing countries and to support African efforts in the consolidation of peace and sustainable development.**

Reducing the debt burden

62. Some progress has been made in debt relief under the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative. As of April 2003, seven countries in sub-Saharan Africa had reached the completion point[1] (when debt is effectively cancelled) and another 15 countries attained the decision point (at which debt servicing is effectively suspended). The debt reduction commitments for the 22 countries are estimated to be $32.25 billion, accounting for about 15 per cent of the total debt stock of sub-Saharan Africa in 2002. Ten African countries, mainly in conflict and post-conflict situations, are in the "HIPC pipeline" and are yet to be considered for debt relief.

63. Progress in the implementation of the HIPC initiative has been painfully slow and cumbersome and even countries reaching their completion points are unlikely to find themselves at sustainable debt levels at the end of the process. This is borne out by the review carried out by the World Bank's Operations and Evaluation Department in early 2003, which indicates that the six African countries that had reached their completion points by the end of September 2002 were likely to experience difficulties in maintaining their target ratios for debt in relation to both exports and government revenue, as well as for debt service to exports. The IMF review indicates that export projections made when countries had reached the decision point had turned out to be overoptimistic in two thirds of the HIPCs.

64. **In light of the slow speed of implementation of the HIPC initiative, a simplification of the procedures and a further review of the content of conditionality need to be considered. Donor countries are also encouraged to provide increased resources to HIPCs and other debt-ridden countries emerging from conflict and to devise specific measures for those countries, which would not otherwise be eligible for debt relief owing to their arrears to international financial institutions.**

Opening international markets

65. There have been some positive developments over the last two to three years in terms of granting duty and quota-free access to developed country markets for products from the least developed countries, including African countries. As of June 2003, 38 African countries were eligible for tariff preferences under the United States African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA). In 2002, the United States of America imported $9 billion of duty-free merchandise under AGOA provisions, recording a 10 per cent increase from 2001.

66. Improved compliance with international standards is critical to take advantage of some of the recent market openings. Various United Nations system organizations

are assisting African countries in this regard. UNIDO, through its regional programme on technology management for sub-Saharan Africa, is facilitating trade participation of selected ECOWAS countries through enhancement of standards, the testing of methodology and promotion of quality and related services. The Joint International Trade Centre/UNCTAD/World Trade Organization Integrated Technical Assistance Programme for Selected Least Developed and Other African Countries, covering 16 countries, is designed to support these countries in their trade performance and in their efforts towards better integration in the international trading system, diversification and enhancement of negotiating capacities. Other programmes include the UNDP/UNCTAD technical assistance programme for Africa, aimed at helping these countries in their response to the Doha Agenda and their preparation for the ministerial meeting in Cancun in September 2003.

67. Notwithstanding the trade preferences under AGOA and the European Union's Everything but Arms Initiative, African countries continue to be constrained from fuller participation in the global economy by a combination of inadequate capacity to meet world trade standards for goods, dependence on commodity exports and tariff peaks and escalation, which are typically concentrated in areas of export interest to lower income countries. The persistence of agricultural subsidies in developed countries remains a major challenge, though the recent proposals for reform of the European Union's common agricultural policy are a welcome development which could encourage Japan and the United States also to show some flexibility on the agricultural subsidies issue.

68. **There is an urgent need for African countries to be successfully integrated into the global trade arrangements, as trade can be an engine for economic growth and crucial for addressing the challenge of poverty reduction. The industrialized countries need to take more vigorous measures to lower their trade barriers against exports from developing countries, including African countries, and open their markets to developing countries. However, progress in reducing trade barriers and opening the markets of developed countries needs to be accompanied by improved domestic policies and enhanced capacity that help countries to take advantage of trade opportunities. African countries will also need to strengthen their trade negotiating capacity, improve infrastructure, diversify their export-base and make export-oriented industries more productive in order to tap into global markets.**

Support for regional cooperation and integration

69. Subregional and regional cooperation and economic integration can be used to promote economic discipline and sound macroeconomic policy, and facilitate the establishment of solid institutional links between neighbouring States. In this context, IMF is providing advice to ECOWAS to carry out its accelerated monetary integration, which will result in two monetary zones, and eventually to lead to a single currency for the ECOWAS subregion. In this regard, a West African Monetary Institution to oversee this harmonization has been established in Ghana.

Harmonizing current international and bilateral initiatives

70. The need to harmonize current initiatives on Africa has been underscored at various forums with a view to enhancing their impact on African development. In its resolution 57/7, the General Assembly adopted NEPAD as the framework within

which the international community, including the United Nations, should concentrate its efforts for African development. The existing coordination and programming mechanisms at the United Nations level include: the Common Country Assessment and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework for enhancing support at the country level; the regional consultative meetings of the United Nations system organizations working in Africa at the regional level, chaired by the Economic Commission for Africa; and the United Nations System Chief Executives Board at the global level. The United Nations harmonization work is being coordinated by the United Nations Development Group.

71. An important development with regard to harmonizing bilateral and multilateral (multilateral development banks) initiatives was the Rome Declaration on Harmonization, adopted at a meeting of major multilateral and bilateral institutions held in Rome in February 2003. The Declaration provides for the harmonization of operational policies, procedures and practices of multilateral and bilateral organizations with those of partner country systems to improve the effectiveness of development assistance, thereby contributing to meeting the Millennium Development Goals.

72. **In view of the fact that NEPAD has been adopted by the international community as a framework for African development, bilateral and multilateral efforts should support the African initiative. The United Nations welcomes international initiatives, such as the G-8 Action Plan for Africa and the Third Tokyo International Conference on African Development process, in support of NEPAD.**

III. Conclusion and recommendations on the future follow-up modality

73. **The foregoing review shows that further progress has been made in the implementation of the recommendations since the consideration of the previous progress report in 2002. The progress, however, has been slow and uneven. The efforts of African countries and the international community need to be accelerated in order to implement the various recommendations in a timely manner.**

74. **A number of problems and challenges have constrained the effective and timely implementation of the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report. They include the lack of political will, persistent conflicts, weak governance to consolidate the reform agenda, weak human and institutional capacity for economic management and administration in general and in dealing with the much-needed reform programmes in particular and the limited financial resources, including from external sources, to tackle the enormous development challenges, particularly reconstruction and rehabilitation in post-conflict countries.**

75. **In view of the multiplicity of existing reporting frameworks in which the United Nations system addresses the issues already raised in the Secretary-General's report and the numerous forums in which they are discussed, appraised and reviewed, it is proposed that the present format for reporting on the implementation of the recommendations of the Secretary-General's report**

on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa be discontinued. Instead, the follow-up and reporting on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report should be mainstreamed in the existing reports of the Secretary-General and the subsidiary bodies of the United Nations.

Notes

[1] Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Tanzania and Uganda.